

NAYLOR, SARAH MARLYNE, Ph.D. Understanding Graduate Student Constructs for Finding Meaning in the Advising Experience: A Qualitative Case Study of Incoming Master's of Social Work Students. (2007)
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The purpose of this study was to uncover the mental constructs (i.e. the effects of prior learning experiences that yield anticipations for the advising process) that master's level social work students bring to the academic advising process and how these constructs impact their construction (i.e. understanding and interpretation) of the advising experience. One central research question guided this study: How do the mental constructs brought to academic advising by master's of social work students shape their construction of the advising experience? Several supporting research questions were asked:

- What prior experiences with academic advising do MSW students bring to the advising process?
- What are MSW student expectations for the role of the advisor in the advising relationship?
- What are MSW student expectations for the role of the advisee in the advising relationship?
- What are MSW student expectations for early, middle, and later advising experiences as they progress through the program?
- What impact do MSW students expect their advising experience will have?

An instrumental qualitative case study research method (Stake, 1995) was employed. The boundaries of the case were the mental constructs from students' previous advising experiences and their expectations for the MSW advising experience. The sample population consisted of the entire population of fall 2006 incoming full-time MSW students (n=80) at UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

Data collection occurred between May and July 2006 and consisted of two rounds of in-depth interviews and a survey. Seventeen interview participants were identified through purposeful sampling, and all incoming first-year MSW students were asked to complete the MSW Academic Advising Inventory. Patterns identified through the first interviews and the survey were clarified in the second interviews.

Findings suggest that incoming students bring to the MSW advising experience what they have learned from previous advising relationships and the hope that their advisor will establish a comfortable advising environment, be equipped with an advising strategy, engage and empower students, and help students focus on their post-MSW career goals. Based on these findings, experiential learning theory and adult learning theory have been proposed as possible conceptual frameworks for graduate student advising.

UNDERSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT CONSTRUCTS FOR FINDING
MEANING IN THE ADVISING EXPERIENCE: A QUALITATIVE CASE
STUDY OF INCOMING MASTER'S OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

by

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Approved by

Dr. Gerald Ponder, Committee Chair

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. Your love sustains me, motivates me, and fulfills me. I would especially like to thank my parents David and Marlyne Cain, who ignited in me a passion for lifelong learning; my sister Kristin Geary, who is a continuing source of inspiration; and my husband Eddie Naylor, who could not have been more supportive and encouraging throughout my graduate studies.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Master's degree programs are a large and rapidly growing segment of graduate education (Baird, 1995; Conrad, Haworth, & Millar, 1993; Council of Graduate Schools, 1994). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported that the number of master's degrees conferred annually more than doubled between 1970 and 2003, and grew from fewer than 250,000 to over 500,000 (NCES, 2004). This trend is expected to continue with a projected 20% increase in the number of master's degrees conferred between 2000 and 2013 (NCES, 2004). Academic advising is an integral element of educating graduate students (Frost, 1991; Mastrodicasa, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Selke & Wong, 1993; Wong et al., 1995). As such, graduate student academic advising deserves attention during this time of growth and change for master's degree programs.

Academic advising plays a critical role in higher education (Austin, Cherney, Crowner, & Hill, 1997; Creamer & Atwell, 1984; Crockett, 1985; National Academic Advising Association [NACADA], 2004a; Winston, Ender, & Miller, 1982) and often is defined as a developmental process that helps students clarify life and career goals as well as develop educational plans to realize those goals (King, 2000). Frost (1991) wrote that academic advising offers students the opportunity to become involved in their

academic futures not only as a method of selecting courses but also as a means of achieving success. Both Astin (1984) and Tinto (1993) found a high correlation between students having a direct relationship with at least one adult on campus and the quality and quantity of students' involvement in and satisfaction with higher education. Meaningful academic advising experiences occur when advisors have regular contact with their advisees; gain meaningful insight into their advisees' academic, social, and personal experiences and needs; and use that insight to help their advisees feel a part of the academic community, develop sound academic and career goals, and be successful learners (NACADA, 2004a). This type of advising experience is critical for student learning and leads to improved retention rates (Austin et al., 1997; Creamer, 1980; Creamer & Atwell, 1984; Crockett, 1985; Glennen & Baxley, 1985; Grites, 1979; Habley, 1982; Ting, 1997). NACADA (2004a) has stated that few college experiences influence student development as much as academic advising, which can involve students in learning and increase their success in higher education. Advising is a collaborative, interactive support system designed to enhance student engagement and success.

As the number of master's level students has increased, researchers have reported that existing advising services are not meeting students' perceived advising needs. For years, master's level students have consistently expressed dissatisfaction with their advising experiences (Beasley-Feinstein, 1986; Guinn & Mitchell, 1986; Noel-Levitz, 2001; Shields & Gillard, 2002). This dissatisfaction is significant because in graduate education a positive personal relationship with a faculty advisor can predict the completion of the degree (Gordon, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Smith &

Valentine, 1987). Given the status of academic advising as an integral component of student retention, satisfaction, and success (Bowen & Kilmann, 1976; Goplerud, 1980; NACADA, 2004a; Nerad & Cerny, 1991), increasing knowledge of graduate student advising is necessary to illuminate the role it plays in guiding students' academic careers and to understand how adequate advising can most benefit students.

Preconceived notions about advising play a major role in how students enter and experience the advising relationship (Beasley-Fielstein, 1986; Nadler & Nadler, 1999). With the ultimate role of improving the advising experience for master's degree students, I conducted a qualitative case study of terminal master's of social work (MSW) students to address the question "How do the mental constructs that MSW students bring to the advising relationship shape their construction of the advising experience?" The primary study goal was to identify patterns and elements of the advising relationship that MSW students perceived as yielding an effective and rewarding advising experience. Applying the knowledge of these patterns can make a meaningful contribution to the improvement of master's level students' success and satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework

Existing Literature

Over the course of the last 30 years, academic advising has evolved from a relatively unexplored area of research to an established field of inquiry. Theories from several disciplines inform advising literature and play a role in the evolving conceptual frameworks of the field. A significant portion of the existing research related to student preferences for advising is interpreted within these evolving frameworks. However, the

majority of the research was developed for and with undergraduate students, and thus provides little insight into mental constructs that graduate students bring to the advising experience or how terminal master's level students (e.g., MSW students) find meaning in the advising relationship. This brief overview of the literature touches on the theories that have influenced academic advising research, the conceptual frameworks for advising that stem from these theories, and the existing research related to student preferences for advising styles or methods. This preliminary exploration demonstrates how an analysis of MSW student advising constructs will advance advising research and practice.

Theories of identity development, cognitive development, and social learning are among the major interdisciplinary theories that have contributed to the conceptual frameworks of academic advising (Creamer, 2000). Erikson's (1968) eight stages of development and Chickering's (1969) student identity development theory asserted that college-age students are struggling to establish adult identities. The cognitive-developmental theories of Piaget (1952), Perry (1968), Kohlberg (1976), and Gilligan (1993) focused on how change in cognitive structure influence the way meaning is derived from experiences. Social learning theories have been used to explain human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interactions between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's (1977) social learning theory emphasized the role that observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others plays in learning.

In turn, these theories have contributed to the development of higher education theories and a conceptual framework for academic advising. In the 1970s, Crookston

(1972) and O'Banion (1972) independently published articles linking advising to theories of identity and cognitive development. Labeled *developmental advising*, a term coined by Crookston, this conceptual framework views the advising relationship as a collaborative process in which the advisor helps the advisee achieve educational, personal, and career goals using institutional and community resources (Winston & Sandor, 1984a).

Crookston (1972) reasoned the converse of developmental advising was a prescriptive advising framework where the advisor imparts information to the advisee in a one-way relationship (Winston et al., 1982). Developmental advising gained credibility over time, and has been referred to as the ideal approach for advising college students (Gordon, 1994).

Hemwall and Trachte (1999) introduced a new concept, *praxis advising*, to the developmental-prescriptive framework. Praxis advising calls for advisors to encourage students to engage in critical self-reflection and realize the value of higher education through its connection to their goals, purposes, and roles as “citizens of the world” (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999, p. 8). The praxis model emphasizes the advisor’s ability to provide sound knowledge and advice about specific areas while simultaneously stimulating the student’s academic interests (Smith, 2002).

Much of the literature related to student preferences for advising is based on the developmental advising conceptual framework. Previous research studies have reported a range of student preferences. Several researchers offered support for the notion that students preferred developmental advising (Creeden, 1990; Guinn & Mitchell, 1986; Hornbuckle, Mahoney, & Borgard, 1979; Larsen & Brown, 1983; Mottarella, Fritzsche,

& Cerabino, 2004; Nadler & Nadler, 1999; Winston & Sandor, 1984a). Conversely, several other researchers found that students preferred alternative types of advising at least some of the time. For example, Fielstein (1989) and Trombley (1984) found that students preferred prescriptive advising to developmental advising. In addition, considerable research has shown that student characteristics such as gender, academic achievement, year in school, and personal preference influence whether students favor developmental or prescriptive advising (Alexitch, 1997; Smith, 2002; Weir, Dickman, & Fuqua, 2005); furthermore, neither type of advising is preferred by all students all of the time. Jordan (2000) placed these three perspectives (i.e., developmental, praxis, and prescriptive advising) on a continuum where advisors must be adept at changing their advising style to effectively meet students' needs for different advising approaches.

The developmental advising framework was constructed with traditional age undergraduate students as its model, and the previously mentioned research studies were conducted using undergraduate students as participants. The body of literature examining undergraduate student advising preferences has not produced a consensus. Nonetheless, advising researchers can use this literature to frame future research inquiries about undergraduate advising preferences. In contrast, graduate student preferences for advising remain unexplored.

Despite the acknowledgement that advising is a crucial component of student success and persistence in graduate education (Baird, 1995; Polson, 1999; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Wong, Selke, & Thomas, 1995), a search for literature related to graduate student advising revealed scant research and little theory (Gelso & Schlosser, 2001).

Indeed, an exhaustive literature review yielded only one research study that directly addressed graduate student preferences for the advising experience. Winston (1993) evaluated letters from graduate level dental students outlining the qualities they looked for in advisors. Winston reported that students most frequently expressed a preference for advisors whose research interests were similar to their own, advisors with whom they felt comfortable, and advisors who students perceived were successful professionals.

In addition, the literature review identified one conceptual framework for graduate advising. Selke and Wong (1996) proposed the mentoring-empowered model that is a combination of Erikson's identity theory and adult learning theory. Selke and Wong's model posited that graduate students require mentoring, which is a relationship between advisor and advisee that encourages acceptance, good communication, trust, openness, and mutual willingness to grow. These components parallel the essential roles of a graduate advisor identified by Winston and colleagues (1984), who described five essential roles and functions of effective advisors: reliable information source, departmental socializer, advocate, role model, and occupational socializer.

Given that graduate advising differs fundamentally from undergraduate advising, the persisting question facing the field is whether any of the existing conceptual frameworks are appropriate for understanding graduate student constructs for academic advising. Typically, graduate students are older and more mature than are undergraduates, and have very different advising needs and lenses for interpreting those needs. Therefore, elements unique to graduate students and graduate advising should be considered when developing a conceptual framework for advising graduate students. To

conceive such a framework, scholars as well as practitioners need to learn more than student preferences for graduate advising; they also need to understand the mental constructs that shape those preferences, and how those constructs affect the advising experience. The mentoring-empowered model and the developmental advising concept may provide such frameworks. Yet, additional theoretical and conceptual frameworks such as the pedagogy of relation (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004), needs theory (McClelland, 1975), expectancy value theory (Vroom, 1964), ecological theory (Barker, 1968), and change theory (Lewin, 1946) are relevant and should be considered before endorsing a single model for graduate student advising.

Several factors demonstrate the need for rigorous qualitative research to explore terminal master's level student constructs for the advising experience. First, the existing research is insufficient to convincingly suggest patterns or conceptual frameworks related to this topic. Although student preferences for advising must be understood to create a positive advising experience for students, and this is a research priority of NACADA (2004b), this area remains largely unexplored. Second, most of the literature examining graduate student advising is directed toward students in doctoral programs. However, terminal master's students comprise more than 90% of all master's students, and they have not been queried about their preferences or expectations for the advising experience (Conrad, Duren, & Haworth, 1998). Last, a review of the literature shows that much of the research consists of either parochial descriptions and guidelines, or narrow quantitative survey studies that lack context and grounding in theory (Habley, 2000; Hodgson & Simoni, 1995; McLaughlin & Starr, 1982; Voorhees, 1990). Moreover, as

Conrad et al. (1998) noted, current graduate advising literature is anchored in faculty and administrator understanding and fails to draw on student perspectives. Thus, it appears the time is long overdue for master's degree students to have a voice in the future of advising research and practice. This qualitative case study of terminal MSW students' mental constructs for finding meaning in the advising relationship provided an opportunity for graduate students to share their experiences and insights.

Researcher Interest

Social work education places great emphasis on students' development of understanding, critical thinking, analysis, self-awareness, empathy, and relationship skills (Council on Social Work Education, 2001). To develop these qualities, students need skilled and knowledgeable faculty advisors. Because the MSW degree is a terminal degree, most MSW graduates immediately enter the work force as professional social workers. Thus, faculty advisors serve a key role helping advisees transition from their student roles to their roles as professionals. Effective advisors not only help students navigate the curriculum but also help students meet their learning and professional goals. In addition, advisors help students who may not be sure whether social work education is the right place for them. Because the MSW degree is a professional degree, faculty advisors also have a responsibility to aid in "gate keeping" for the profession.

However, many faculty advisors assume that students enrolling in a MSW program already know what they want to study and where they want to practice after graduating. These faculty members do not perceive their advising role as a valuable one. Whereas a few students may enter the program with a well-defined program of study and

clear career goals, many students appear to yearn for guidance from advisors. My passion for advising students led me to become an academic advisor, and my desire to improve advising services for graduate students led to my enrollment in a doctoral program. My research has focused on how academic advising can help students learn and enrich their higher education experiences. By exploring MSW student constructs for advising, I want to help graduate students, faculty, and administrators realize the rich potential of the advising relationship.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research was to conduct a qualitative case study to investigate the mental constructs that terminal MSW students bring to the advising experience as well as their construction of that experience. The elements of academic advising and the advising relationship that incoming full-time MSW students identified as valuable are articulated. Findings offer MSW faculty advisors and administrators insight into how students make meaning of the advising experience, and provide an opportunity to plan appropriate advising programs. Broadly, the products of the inquiry enrich the context for academic advising research at the graduate level and contribute to improvement of graduate student success and satisfaction. Specifically, the study allows researchers and practitioners to learn if a gap exists between MSW student constructs for the advising experience and MSW faculty or institutional constructs.

The findings of the present study establish a baseline for the mental constructs MSW students bring to the advising experience and suggest several areas for future inquiry: (a) whether MSW faculty and administrators consider the findings consistent

with their own constructs for academic advising, (b) whether the student constructs are consistent with advising services already in place for these students, and (c) whether the different levels of student satisfaction with advising are linked to different understandings of the role of advising.

Research Questions

Central research question. The following question guided this research study: How do the mental constructs brought to academic advising by master's of social work students shape their construction of the advising experience?

Supporting research questions. To identify the major trends in MSW student constructs for the academic advising experience, the following supporting research questions were asked:

- What prior experiences with and knowledge of academic advising do MSW students bring to the advising process?
- What are MSW student expectations for the role of the advisor in the advising relationship?
- What are MSW student expectations for the role of the advisee in the advising relationship?
- What are MSW student expectations for early, middle, and later advising experiences as they progress through the program?
- What impact do MSW students expect their advising experience will have?

Definition of Terms

Academic advising. Academic advising is a process that assists students in the clarification of their life and career goals through the development of educational plans for the realization of these goals (King, 2000).

Faculty advisor. Faculty advisors are faculty members who are responsible for helping guide students through an academic program (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001).

Mental constructs. For the purpose of this paper, I am defining mental constructs as the affects of prior learning experiences that yield anticipations and expectations for the advising process.

Construction of the advising experience. For the purpose of this paper, I am defining this phrase as the understanding and interpretation of the advising experience.

Research Context

This study was conducted at the School of Social Work of a large southeastern research I institution, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill), where I have served as the academic and administrative advisor for seven years. The UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work houses an exemplary MSW program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, the accrediting body for MSW programs. The full-time MSW program at the School of Social Work has a traditional curriculum that consists of two years of full-time study and incorporates both course work and field practicums.

Each year, approximately 75 full-time students enter the MSW program, and each new cohort of students is typically comprised of 12% to 15% male students and 85% to 88% female students. Approximately 15% to 20% of incoming full-time students are students of color, and 75% to 80% are Caucasian. Generally, 60% of the students are North Carolina residents and 40% come from other states or other countries. On average, students accepted into the MSW program have an undergraduate grade point average of 3.49 on a 4.0 scale, and enter the program with a background of at least 40 months of paid social work experience (G. Cooper, personal communication, October 17, 2006).

I have established professional relationships with the administrators and faculty of the School of Social Work, which are based on considerable mutual respect.

Administrators and faculty have worked with me as a colleague, and the administration has been particularly supportive of my doctoral study and research efforts. Initial requests for access to the incoming fall 2006 full-time MSW student cohort were well received, and the formal proposal was approved by the Dean, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Associate Dean for Research.

Throughout the study, I balanced my simultaneous roles of researcher and employee of the School of Social Work. I made a concerted effort to acknowledge my insider perspective and biases as I collected and interpreted the data through techniques such as keeping a detailed research journal, member checking, and regularly consulting with critical colleagues. My familiarity with MSW advising was a benefit to this study because the intrinsic value I found in it motivated me to set high standards for my research and for myself.

Research Methodology

Research Philosophy

This research study employed the qualitative case study method. Qualitative research locates the observer in the world and involves of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Using a phenomenological approach, this study attempted to understand the meaning of academic advising for MSW students from the student's perspective. The case study method, a detailed examination of one setting or subject (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), allowed the study goals to be accomplished.

In the planning phase of this study, techniques for conducting qualitative case studies suggested by Maxwell (2005), Stake (1995), and Yin (2003), were reviewed and considered as a framework for research design. Although Yin's (2003) approach to case studies recommended more structure than I wished to impose, his suggestions for employing multiple sources of data and maintaining a chain of evidence were followed to strengthen trustworthiness. Stake's (1995) approach provided less structure than I planned to use, yet his notion that the researcher should begin with a solid conceptual framework allowed my research focus to be refined as the study unfolded. Therefore, Stake was a primary influence in my study. Maxwell (2005) offered an interactive approach to qualitative studies that provided structure without limiting the direction of the research findings. Maxwell emphasized the centrality of the conceptual framework to identify the research problem and inform the research design. He leaves room for a priori and existing theory and research as well as experiential knowledge to form a conceptual

framework (Maxwell, 2005). By focusing on Maxwell and incorporating relevant elements of Stake and Yin, I maintained a sound research design as well as the flexibility essential for allowing the MSW students to guide the inquiry.

Methods of Data Collection

The chosen methods of data collection included two rounds of in-depth qualitative interviews and a supplementary quantitative survey to inform interview results.

Qualitative data collection methods were selected for this study because I did not know a priori what I would find and because I wanted to generate *thick descriptions*, that is, perceptions of the participants with data that are rich in detail (Stake, 1995). Consistent with Yin's (2003) recommendation for multiple methods of data collection, a quantitative method of data collection was used to supplement the qualitative findings. Including this supplemental quantitative method allowed for a fuller understanding of the qualitative interviews, and saturation of the data source (i.e., the fall 2006 incoming full-time MSW student cohort at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work).

The first phase of this research study included conducting two focus groups with 16 students to pilot test the interview and survey questions; the protocol was then refined based on findings from the focus groups. The second phase involved simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Seventeen participants were interviewed to elicit student perspectives of advising constructs for MSW students, and a survey evaluating advising preferences was distributed to all 80 of the incoming full-time students. After analyzing and comparing data collected through the interviews and the survey, a second interview was conducted with each of the original 17 interview

participants. The primary objective of the second interviews included corroboration and qualification of data collected and patterns found in the initial interviews and survey. The interviews and the survey collected data regarding students' anticipations and expectations for the MSW advising experience. The interviews went beyond anticipations and expectations to explore prior experiences with advising and the implications of these experiences for making meaning of the MSW advising experience. IRB approval was obtained from both the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and UNC-Chapel Hill before any participants were contacted.

Focus groups. To test and refine the questions for use in the interviews and in the survey, I facilitated two focus groups with 16 current full-time MSW students at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. The purpose of the focus groups was to learn what revisions might be necessary or helpful to best elicit meaningful responses about MSW students' constructs for the advising experience. In the first focus group, questions from the draft interview protocol were posed to current MSW students. Participants in the second focus group completed the MSW Academic Advising Inventory. Although not unexpected, the focus groups generated some unanticipated responses as well as new ideas. In addition, I asked for feedback on the interview and survey questions to see if students thought the queries were comprehensive, appropriate, and clear.

The design and implementation of the focus groups followed Tipping's (1998) procedures for conducting focus groups. An invitation to participate in the focus groups was extended to current MSW students via e-mail and a written invitation was placed in their campus mailboxes. Every effort was made to schedule the focus groups at a time

when 7 to 10 MSW students could participate. The focus groups were audiotape recorded and transcribed for reference and analysis. Based on the findings from the focus groups, I revised the interview and survey questions for meaning and clarity.

Student interviews. As I planned and conducted the interviews, I utilized Seidman's (2006) guidelines for conducting in-depth interviews and Weiss's (1994) principles for interacting with participants during an interview. Seidman's (2006) interviewing method is grounded in the phenomenological tradition of three distinct, thematic interviews designed to question meanings of experience. Although I conducted two rounds of in-depth interviews instead of three, I followed Seidman's (2006) interviewing approach of spending enough time with participants to put their thoughts and behaviors in context to find their meaning. The interviews were semi-structured to ensure exploration of the same topics with participants while allowing the flexibility to explore individual experiences (Seidman, 2006).

The first round of in-depth interviews was completed before the survey results were available, and the second round of interviews took place after the survey results had been reviewed. In the interim between interviews, it is reasonable to assume that participants continued to reflect on their advising experiences and brought new ideas to the second interview. In addition, new questions were added to the interview protocol based on the first round of interviews and the survey results. The criterion for judging completion of the participant interviews was *saturation of data*, that is, the point in the study at which I began to hear the same information reported (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994).

The interview process began in late May 2006 with 17 incoming full-time MSW students at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. Participants were chosen by obtaining the list of fall 2006 incoming MSW students from the director of admissions. Purposeful sampling (Seidman, 2006) was used to identify 25 potential participants who represented the demographics of the incoming student cohort. Demographic characteristics used to identify participants included gender, race, residency, and age. Interviewing both typical and atypical incoming students enabled me to test potential negative cases and to saturate the data while capturing as many rich insights and experiences from participants as possible.

After potential participants were identified, they were invited to participate in two interviews. The potential participants were sent an e-mail that included a description of the person conducting the study, the reason for the study, the sponsor of the study, how their name was identified, why they were selected, the purpose for the interviews, what would be asked of them, an assurance that confidentiality was guaranteed, and that the interviews would be recorded. If a potential participant agreed to be interviewed, he or she responded to the e-mail to arrange a date, time, and place for the first interview. The date, time, and place for the second interview were arranged at the close of the first interview. The length for each interview was approximately one hour, and the interim between interviews was approximately 6 weeks. Participants were assigned participant identification numbers as they volunteered to participate in the study that were used throughout data collection and analysis to preserve their anonymity.

The first 17 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted in late May and early June 2006. Participants completed a consent form prior to the first interview. The interview included lines of inquiry about each participant's understanding of advising, preferences for the advising relationship, and expectations for the advising experience. Subsequent questions were conversational and followed "markers" to encourage the participants to expand on their responses (Weiss, 1994). The audiotape recordings of the interviews were transcribed and reviewed for themes or patterns in responses. Based on the findings of this review and the survey results, I created an interview protocol for the second round of interviews that included additional questions and topics and discussion.

The second 17 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, with the same participants, were conducted in July 2006, and focused on elaboration and clarification of initial findings. Participants were asked if they were willing to be contacted for feedback after data collection and initial data analysis were complete. Interviews were conducted either in person or by telephone if participants were not within driving distance of Chapel Hill.

Student survey. Following the first round of interviews, potential survey participants were contacted. An e-mail invitation to participate in the study was sent to all 80 incoming full-time MSW students, including those who had participated in interviews. The e-mail invitation stated the purpose of the study, and students were asked to give their consent to participate electronically. Students were assured that their survey results would be confidential and that all results of the study would be reported only as aggregate trends and observations. Once students gave their consent, they were directed to complete the online survey. Institutional Researcher Karen Blackwell, at the

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, put the survey instrument online (K. Blackwell, personal communication, January 25, 2006).

The survey was modeled on the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) to allow analysis of MSW student advising preferences (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). The AAI is the most widely used research instrument in advising research (Daller, Creamer, & Creamer, 1997) and was developed to assess undergraduate student perceptions of and preferences for advising activities (Winston & Sandor, 1986). Winston and Sandor (1984b) reported that Cronbach's alpha, conducted to determine internal consistency, revealed an alpha coefficient of .78.

Because the AAI was developed to evaluate the advising experiences of undergraduate students, I made some minor revisions to the survey to adequately capture incoming MSW student preferences concerning advising. Participants completed a revised Part I and the original Part IV of the AAI. Part I measures advising preferences and Part IV asks for demographic information. Revisions included adding "It is important to me that. . ." to each question in Part I of the AAI in order to accurately assess student expectations for advising rather than capture student evaluation of past advising experiences. In addition, a section of questions was added to the survey to address possible advising interests specific to MSW graduate students. Although this additional section of questions does not carry the same level of reliability associated with the original AAI, it is reasonably reliable. The questions were modeled on the questions in Part I of the AAI, and they were reviewed by several researchers and advising experts who ensured face reliability of the instrument by comparing the modified questions with

the original survey questions. Permission to use the AAI with these revisions for this study was granted by Tom Grites, an academic advising scholar involved in development of the AAI and assistant to the provost at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, as well as Marsha Miller, assistant director of programs for NACADA (T. Grites, personal communication, January 17, 2006; M. Miller, personal communication, January 12, 2006).

Several open-ended questions appeared at the end of the survey to provide participants an opportunity to elaborate on their understanding of and preferences for the advising experience. Survey participants were asked to provide their contact information if they were willing to be contacted for feedback after data collection and initial data analyses were complete.

Methods of Data Analysis

The goal of data analysis was to establish what Yin (2003) termed a chain of evidence, which is a process designed to increase the reliability of a case study so that, if desired, an external reader of the study could follow the derivation of data from the initial research questions to the ultimate conclusions. To this end, in addition to the data analysis techniques described below, I maintained a research journal throughout the course of this study to record questions, rationales for decision-making, notes from meetings with critical colleagues and committee members, reflections, and ideas.

Interviews. Preliminary analysis was concurrent with the first round of interviews. I audio recorded and transcribed each interview, noting the date, time and length of the interview, and the participant's identification number. Following completion of all the

interviews and transcriptions, I listened again to each interview recording while reviewing the transcription to ensure transcript accuracy. Following Weiss's (1994) suggestions, analytic memos and post interview reflections were recorded within the interview transcripts. These memos included theoretical, personal, and methodological notes to reflect on the interviews and help piece together data. After making necessary changes to the transcriptions, I asked each participant to read his or her interview transcript and review it for accuracy. Participants were offered the opportunity to elaborate or modify their transcripts.

Data from these transcripts were categorized by students' general understanding of academic advising, advisor preferences, advisee preferences, the evolution of the advising relationship, and the envisioned effects of the advising experience. I then developed coding categories as I sorted each set of data into categories and subcategories. To analyze the interview data, I looked for significant statements, meanings of statements, and meanings of themes to describe the advising expectations. I searched for the connected and disconnected threads among the experiences of the participants (Seidman, 2006).

Survey. To analyze survey data, I consulted assessment scales created by Winston and Sandor (1986). Participants were coded as "interview participants" or "survey only participants," and data analysis techniques included combined descriptive statistics of all the participants, separate descriptive statistics of the interview participants and the survey only participants, and *t*-tests to compare the responses of the two groups of participants. In addition, Winston and Sandor's (1984b) assessment scales were used to find an overall

Developmental-Prescriptive Advising score and to rate students' advising preferences by category: personalizing education, academic decision-making, and selecting courses. Qualitative data collected in the open-ended survey questions were transcribed and analyzed in the same manner as the interview data.

Final analysis. The dominant themes of incoming MSW students' constructs for the advising experience were identified in order to begin building a conceptual framework for how MSW students interpret the graduate advising experience. Themes and patterns were identified by constructing matrices that analyzed and compared the interview data findings, the survey data findings, and the open-ended survey data findings. Data collected in the focus groups were also consulted. A primary goal of the final analysis was to build a logical chain of evidence that linked each source of data to the conclusions (Yin, 2003). After data collection and analysis were complete, interview and survey participants who volunteered to be contacted in the final phase of the study were asked to review the key findings and give feedback in order to validate the identified themes and patterns.

Trustworthiness

A number of steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this research study. Triangulation of data was employed to preserve the trustworthiness of results. This step was achieved by the two in-depth interviews conducted with interview participants and the survey. Some may question why faculty, administrators, and others were not included in either interviews or survey portions of this study. Purposefully, the participant pool was limited to full-time incoming MSW students so their descriptions of advising

expectations would determine the research findings. Students had an opportunity to tell their own stories and report those stories as authentically as possible.

I took a series of steps to uphold the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings and the validity of the quantitative findings. Simultaneous collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data for a single case study was, at times, difficult to navigate. Even so, findings were trustworthy and valid because I strove to remain faithful to the different strategies for ensuring trustworthiness and validity of each form of data.

To ensure a trustworthy interpretation of the interview findings, I recorded the interviews and ensured they were transcribed accurately by double-checking the tapes with the transcriptions. Moreover, I asked the participants to review their interview transcripts for accuracy before coding any data. Although I cannot guarantee the participants gave honest responses to the questions, I attempted to establish good interviewing partnerships and follow the interview protocol techniques previously described. Shank (2002) reasoned, “Validity deals with the notion that what you say you have observed is, in fact, what really happened. In the final analysis, validity is always about truth” (p.92). With this notion in mind, the results of the focus groups and interviews conducted in this study should be trustworthy.

The AAI is a survey instrument that has passed previous tests of validity and reliability (Winston & Sandor, 1984). By checking my revisions of the survey with advising and research experts to confirm their reliability and validity, the survey retained its credibility. To protect the validity of the survey instrument, statistical procedures, and results, I sought advice from several colleagues experienced in survey analysis. The

opportunity to survey nearly the entire incoming MSW full-time student population also added to the trustworthiness of the survey results.

In addition, conducting the focus groups substantially strengthened the trustworthiness of the study. The focus groups were recorded and transcribed, and guidelines for focus groups were consulted. Results of the focus groups illuminated the interview and survey questions, allowing an opportunity to revise the interview protocol and survey. Furthermore, the focus groups assisted in data saturation by providing additional insight into the MSW advising experience.

Limitations

Despite extensive efforts to ensure trustworthiness in this research study, two limitations should be mentioned. First, using both qualitative and quantitative data has inherent challenges. Adequately addressing a research question using two separate research methods required great effort and expertise, and it was often difficult to compare the results of two analyses using data of different forms (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2003). I chose to incorporate a quantitative survey in this study because it helped answer the research question. In-depth qualitative interviews provided thick description, and the survey provided an opportunity to question the entire incoming full-time MSW student population and saturate the data set. The benefits of using both research methodologies outweighed the risks they presented.

Second, generalizability is often cited as a limitation of qualitative case study research. Maxwell (2005) distinguished between internal and external generalizability. Internal generalizability refers to the generalizability of research findings within the case

study, and external generalizability refers to the generalizability of research findings beyond the case under examination (Maxwell, 2005). Usually qualitative researchers are concerned more with internal generalizability than external generalizability (Maxwell, 2005). By saturating the data set and taking measures to ensure trustworthiness, this study is internally generalizable. Although the results of this case study may add to the understanding of student constructs for academic advising at other terminal master's degree programs, the aim of the study was to uncover student constructs for academic advising at the UNC-Chapel Hill MSW program. Thus, because external generalizability was not a priority, the obvious question of whether interviewing and surveying terminal master's students in other programs or at multiple Research I institutions would add to the generalizability of results is not as critical to the validity of the study.

This qualitative inquiry of MSW student constructs for advising attempts to provide a rich context and explanation for how MSW students perceive the MSW advising experience. The call for more qualitative and rigorous research studies in graduate advising has been made by experts in the field, and my expectation is that trustworthiness has been achieved and the outcomes of this study are credible and useful.

Summary

To elaborate on the role advising plays in MSW student satisfaction and success, researchers must understand the lenses through which students view advising. These findings do not make recommendations for delivering advising services to MSW students. Rather, they allow researchers as well as practitioners to review current advising practices in light of mental constructs that MSW students bring to the advising

experience. This study brings attention to a neglected area of advising research, and it is my hope that it will ultimately enhance the advising experience for MSW students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Similar to undergraduate students in their formative years searching for identities, so too is the field of academic advising in its formative years seeking to establish a clear identity. Advising literature contends that advising is an integral component of each student's educational experience. If this tenant applies to all students, then graduate students stand to gain, at the minimum, as much from their advising experiences as do undergraduate students and other student populations. However, while the advising profession continues to search for and define the best practices and theories for the advising field, graduate students and other special student populations should not be excluded from the research dialogue. A review of the literature illustrated a critical gap in the knowledge base and the need for rigorous qualitative studies that examine graduate student constructs for the advising experience. The following literature review addresses this gap by describing six critical areas: (a) the emergence of academic advising as a profession; (b) the evolution of advising as a field of research; (c) the development of theoretical frameworks for academic advising; (d) advising research that explores undergraduate student preferences for academic advising; (e) advising literature that addresses graduate student preferences for academic advising; and (f) the context for this research study.

Emergence of Academic Advising as a Profession

When considering patterns in advising research, it is necessary to understand and appreciate how advising has evolved. The earliest American institutions of higher education were established by clergy to train students for the ministry and for public service. The curriculum was structured specifically to meet those ends and offered few choices (Voorhees, 1990). Even when secular colleges were established, college enrollment was low because only the elite could afford to delay work and attend college. Affluent parents sent their children to college not only for academic instruction but also for guidance on how to lead a moral and “proper” life (Voorhees, 1990). College presidents and some faculty were responsible for guiding students in all these areas as American colleges acted “in loco parentis,” in place of the parents (Voorhees, 1990).

A unique aspect of American colleges and universities was that, early in the institutions’ existence, they acknowledged a responsibility for both the academic and the personal needs of students. By the end of the 19th century, faculty began to have responsibility for academic guidance of students as a means of helping students make appropriate course selections from a less structured and increasingly complex college curriculum (Rudolph, 1962). The first formal system for advising was established in 1820 at Kenyon College where each student was teamed with a faculty member who served as the student’s advisor. Leading institutions such as Harvard University and The Johns Hopkins University followed in the mid- and late-1800s with systems of academic advising.

Faculty had sole responsibility for academic advising until the mid-20th century (Frost, 2000). As society's need for educated people grew to meet the demands of technological advances and increased occupational and educational opportunities, colleges and universities broadened their curricula and widened their bases of enrollment. Federal funding from the National Science Foundation in 1950 supported scientific and technological advances and resulted in increased research activity in higher education (Frost, 2000). In addition, the GI Bill enabled veterans of World War II to attend college tuition free and produced record numbers of students enrolled in higher education (Frost, 2000). During this time, the curriculum continued to expand in breadth and complexity. A critical need developed for advisors who had specialized knowledge of the curriculum and were trained to work with students (Wall, 1998).

As student populations grew in number and diversity, universities expanded their offerings and structure. However, while students were faced with more curriculum choices, demands on faculty forced them to become more focused on research and to answer more demands for their time outside of the classroom (Frost, 2000). In the 1960s and 1970s, the baby boomers reached college age and student populations grew exponentially while becoming increasingly diverse. However, during this time faculty became more devoted to research and therefore much of the responsibility for advising was shifted to professional academic advisors and other student affairs professionals (Wall, 1988).

By the late 1970s, academic advising began to resemble an organized profession. In 1979, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) was formed and had

more than 500 members by the end of its first year (Frost, 2000). Currently NACADA has over 9,300 members, and academic advising services have continued to evolve in terms of organization, training, evaluation, recognition, and adapting to change (NACADA, 2007).

Today, academic advising has taken on increased importance as a contributor to student persistence and success (Goetz, 1988). Student populations have increasingly diverse needs and students are demanding more and better academic advising (Keeling, 2003). To meet these increasing and changing needs of students, academic advising must continue its evolution as a credible and significant academic field of inquiry.

Evolution of Academic Advising Research

History of Advising Research

From its inception, the field of academic advising has produced a substantial body of literature (Voorhees, 1990). When colleges and universities initially organized formal academic advising programs to strengthen students' higher education experiences, national reports and other data suggested that improvements in advising practice were less powerful than many expected (Frost, 2000). In its 1984 report *Involvement in Learning*, the National Institute of Education identified advising as one of the weakest components of the undergraduate academic experience. Furthermore, only half of students who responded to a 1986 national survey that measured the quality of advising services expressed satisfaction with their experience of advising (Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987). The newly emerging field of academic advising immediately found itself on the defensive and in need of establishing its credibility.

In an effort to encourage both reflection and improved practice, early advising literature focused on collection of information about academic advising practices. The American College Testing Service (ACT) began a series of surveys of advising practice (Frost, 2000). The major research questions included “How are campus advising practices coordinated and organized at different types of institutions,” “Who performs advising services at different types of institutions,” “How are advising programs and advisors evaluated,” and “What are the goals of academic advising?” (Frost, 2000).

Responses to these research queries revealed that campus advising programs had a primary focus on providing information to students but did not evaluate the effect of the advising services on students (Frost, 2000). Frost (2000) wrote, “By the early 1990s, conflicting attitudes toward advising at the national level and reports of actual campus practice indicated that change was needed” (p. 12). Today, new research questions go beyond current advising practices and explore topics such as defining the theoretical foundations of academic advising and identifying the effects of advising services on students (Frost, 2000).

Current State of Advising Research

Both early and current advising literature appears to be addressing similar questions that are based on several assumptions. First, a consistent premise throughout advising literature is that academic advising is a topic worthy of focused research. Perhaps more important, advising literature assumes the role of academic advising is a vital element for student success and satisfaction in higher education. NACADA endorsed *The Concept of Academic Advising* statement that said:

Academic advising is integral to fulfilling the teaching and learning mission of higher education. Through academic advising, students learn to become members of their higher education community, to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and to prepare to be educated citizens of a democratic society and a global community. (National Academic Advising Association, 2007)

In addition, most advising literature assumes that faculty advisors play a role in effective academic advising that is not only critical but also unique and one that cannot be filled by professional advisors (McLaughlin & Starr, 1982).

Curiously, these assumptions do not appear to have been either questioned or validated by those contributing to the body of advising knowledge (Habley, 2000). The elements most often found in advising literature include bold generalizations, guidelines, and survey data as well as descriptions of current advising practices (Habley, 2000). The literature lacks many fundamental research elements including the development of theories, research that builds on itself and generates new research, experimental design, and qualitative analysis (Habley, 2000; Voorhees, 1990). All too often, advising researchers cite outdated primary sources or secondary sources as the foundation for their theoretical frameworks and the context for their research findings. Although the recommended strategies, guidelines, programs, and services may have value, these suggestions exist in a vacuum because they are neither rooted in an evolving line of research inquiry nor grounded in theory. As Kramer and Peterson (1983) succinctly stated, “There is very little research upon which to build a case for the importance of academic advising” (p. 44). In addition, published research in academic advising reveals a lack of context, lack of grounding in theory, and lack of evolution. Winston, Miller,

Ender, and Grites (1984) noted, “Most attempts at research on academic advising have been handicapped by narrowness and parochial orientation” (p. 44). McLaughlin and Starr (1982) reviewed more than 150 articles on academic advising published between 1965 and 1981, and summarized their findings stating, “Research is characterized mostly by surveys and reports of innovative practices. Studies correlating techniques to outcomes and effectiveness are scarce” (p. 15).

These findings were supported by Voorhees (1990), who also contended that scant research had evaluated the effectiveness of academic advising. Furthermore, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) wrote, “Our own review of the evidence [on the impact of academic advising] suggests little in the way of methodological rigor to differentiate those studies that yield a positive association from those where the link is trivial and statistically non-significant” (p. 404). From its inception as a profession to today, the field of academic advising has suffered from a lack of pure and disciplined research.

NACADA has published a research agenda of 10 advising topics identified by the NACADA Research Committee as critical areas for research in advising (2004b). Examples of these research areas include (a) the development of methodologies to evaluate individual academic advisors, (b) the identification of factors that students feel are most important in effective academic advising, (c) the assessment of the effects of the higher educational institutional organizational structure on academic advising services, and (d) the examination of the components historically deemed to be involved in effective academic advising (National Academic Advising Association, 2004b). Several of the research questions proposed by NACADA ask advising researchers to examine and

delineate long-held beliefs about academic advising. These research questions are significant in terms of both their potential to improve advising services for students and their potential to enhance the knowledge and credibility of advising as a field of inquiry.

Future of Advising Research

If academic advising researchers are to respond to these questions and establish academic advising as a mature field of inquiry, researchers must continue to develop a rigorous body of research that enhances understanding of advising, assists in planning for advising, and serves as a guide to decision making in advising (Habley, 2000). Using both quantitative research methodologies (e.g., quasi-experimental) and qualitative methodologies (e.g., phenomenological, grounded theory, and generalizable case studies) would allow researchers to address the advising research agenda of the future. Research approaches that use mixed-methods designs to combine quantitative and qualitative measures should play an integral role in triangulating and improving trustworthiness of research findings. In particular, employing qualitative research methods will enable advising researchers to address the knowledge gaps in the existing advising literature.

When considering quantitative research, quasi-experimental research designs would make it possible for advising research to move from describing advising practices to examining causal relationships in advising services. Surveys alone cannot capture the complexity of variables involved in academic advising. Grites (1979) noted that most quantitative advising research consists of surveys, and argued that more experimental research studies should be undertaken. Likewise, Voorhees (1990) argued for rigor in quantitative research, and wrote, “Sophistication in statistical techniques might permit

advising researchers to control for extraneous sources of variance and to examine more closely the differences among key concepts” (1990).

However, when quantitative research methods are not preceded by adequate descriptions of advising techniques and definitions of key concepts in advising, quantitative methods alone cannot provide a basis for replication and generalizability (Voorhees, 1990). Introducing rigorous qualitative research techniques to academic advising would make it possible to establish a sound conceptual framework for the meaning of advising and its key components while also providing a thick description and context for the survey data that already exists. McGillin (2000) contended that the introduction of qualitative and contextualized analysis was the missing link in theory building for academic advising, and that once the literature shifted in that direction then research might begin to lead in new directions grounded in context and theory.

Development of Theoretical Frameworks for Academic Advising

History of Theoretical Frameworks for Advising

Credible and mature fields of inquiry need a solid theoretical base as well as a body of significant research (Creamer, 2000; McLaughlin & Starr, 1982). Theory provides a lens through which research is interpreted, and in turn, research shapes theory. Currently, advising does not have theory that is unique to the field. Rather, scholars and practitioners of academic advising have drawn theoretical frameworks from other disciplines to describe the value of advising. Examples of the interdisciplinary theories that have contributed to conceptual frameworks of academic advising include identity theories such as (a) Erikson’s (1968) stages of social development and Chickering’s

(1969) theory of student identity development; (b) cognitive development theories such as those developed by Piaget (1952), Perry (1968), Kohlberg (1976), and Gilligan (1993); and (c) social learning theories such as Bandura's (1977) theory of learning through observation.

The developmental advising conceptual framework grew out of these theories of identity, cognitive development, and social learning. Developmental advising (Crookston, 1972; O'Banion, 1972) is a rational process that focuses on the whole person - intellectually, personally, and socially - and recognizes the importance of interactions between the student, the campus, and the community environment (Gordon, 1994). According to Winston, et al. (1984), "Developmental academic advising is defined as a systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources" (p. 19). Crookston defined developmental advising as a student-centered process that facilitates rational processes, environmental and personal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills (1972). Similarly, O'Banion (1972) described developmental advising as a process that included (a) exploration of life goals; (b) exploration of vocational goals; (c) program choice; (d) course choice; and (e) scheduling courses. This model places course selection within the broader context of the student's life and career goals (King, 2005). Developmental advising is based on the premise that advising is a form of teaching, that the relationship between the advisor and the advisee is

one of critical importance for student success, and that students share a responsibility for their learning (Crookston, 1972; Winston et al., 1984).

Unlike developmental advising, prescriptive advising is didactic and does not involve forming relationships between advisors and students (Frost, 2000). The prescriptive advising model is a relationship based on the expertise of the advisor rather than a collaborative effort between advisor and advisee (Weir, Dickman, & Fuqua, 2005). For prescriptive advisors, advising is a single-direction activity where the advisor takes the initiative in course selection and schedule planning for students (Winston & Sandor, 1984). Crookston (1972) described a prescriptive advising relationship as one in which advisors respond to specific academic questions brought to them by students but seldom address more comprehensive academic concerns. Although not a formalized theory, the developmental advising conceptual framework has provided the theoretical lens for a large portion of advising literature.

Current State of Theoretical Frameworks for Advising

As the field of academic advising has evolved, developmental advising has gained increased credibility. Some experts within the field have referred to developmental advising as ideal approach for work with college students (Gordon, 1994). However, a dialogue inviting a debate about the value of developmental advising and the consideration of alternative theoretical frameworks for advising is slowly gaining momentum. For example, Hemwall and Trachte (1999) found that definitions of developmental advising in the literature emphasize human growth while de-emphasizing or ignoring academic learning. They wrote, “The concept of developmental advising

moves the focus of academic advising away from academic learning toward a broad concept of student development” (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999).

As an alternative to developmental advising, Hemwall and Trachte (1999) suggested a new concept called praxis advising. Stemming from the work of Freire (1970), praxis advising encourages advisors to engage students in critical self-reflection to realize the value of higher education in relation to their goals (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999). Thus, advisees learn to discuss the purpose and meaning of their academic progress in terms of their educational purpose and values (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999). Praxis advising reasons that critical reflection, which is a process of understanding and analyzing the beliefs, norms, assumptions, and practices that give meaning to an individual’s experiences, is a foundation for acting effectively (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999). Similar to developmental advising, the praxis model also supports advising as teaching; however, unlike developmental advising, the emphasis of the praxis model is on learning rather than on personal development (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999). Jordan (2000) placed these three perspectives - developmental, praxis, and prescriptive advising - on a continuum where advisors must be adept at changing their advising style to provide effective advising to advisees.

In fall 2005, the 25th volume of the NACADA Journal was devoted to theoretical and philosophical frameworks for advising. The issue included articles that encouraged viewing advising through different theoretical lenses such as strengths-based or “appreciative” advising, Socratic self-examination, and social norms theory (Hagen, 2005). Signaling a new focus for advising theory beyond the developmental advising

framework, the guest editor of the volume, Peter Hagan, suggested that the advising field of inquiry should move beyond the flat continuum of developmental-prescriptive advising to a multi-dimensional approach to advising theory (Hagan, 2005). Moving to address this need, in 2006, NACADA created a standing commission related to theoretical frameworks for advising named Theory and Philosophy of Advising. The creation of this commission makes advising theory a formal part of NACADA's structure and acknowledges the importance of theory in future discussions of advising research and practice.

Future of Theoretical Frameworks for Advising

Academic advising is a complex activity based on the interaction of student behaviors, advisor behaviors, and institutional conditions (Creamer, 2000). Sound theories provide explanations and reveal underlying dynamics for complex phenomena. Without a theory unique to the field, the advising field of inquiry has relied on a single conceptual framework, developmental advising, to describe the ideal advising relationship. Having recognized the need to move beyond this framework, advising literature has begun to move from a sole endorsement of developmental advising and has initiated dialogue on new theoretical frameworks such as praxis advising and strengths-based advising.

The recent attention NACADA focused on theory demonstrated a renewed commitment to identifying theories specific to advising. Indeed, additional theoretical frameworks from several disciplines should be explored that may have direct relevance for advising in terms of how students learn and make decisions. Such theories include

adult learning theory, pedagogy of relation, communities of practice, ecological theory, motivational theory, and expectancy value theory.

Adult learning theory encompasses several areas of research including self-directed (also called adult) learning, critical reflection, experiential learning, and learning to learn. Self-directed learning is the process by which adults take control of their own learning (Knowles, 1990). Critical reflection incorporates the notion that adults are capable of learning through self examination (Schlossberg, 1984). Experiential learning denotes the belief that adult learning is grounded in adults' experiences and that these experiences are valuable resources (Kolb, 1984). Learning to learn involves the strategies adults use to learn such as possessing a self-conscious awareness of how they come to believe that something is true (King and Kitchener, 1994).

The concepts of pedagogy of relation and communities of practice both emphasize the role and importance of social relationships in learning. An outgrowth of feminist theory, pedagogy of relation holds that learning takes place when there is a "division of labor" between the teacher and the student; that is, each person brings unique knowledge and experiences that add value to the relationship (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004). In terms of advising, the division of labor between the advisor and the student would set the tone for the advising relationship. The concept of communities of practice may be germane to advising as well. In communities of practice, people engage around a common interest by collaborating and sharing to create innovative and meaningful learning experiences (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Applied to advising, the

student, the advisor, and the educational community would form the environment within which the student constructs his or her identity.

In contrast, motivational needs theory and expectancy value theory emphasize the influence of an individual's perceived needs and values in decision making. Motivational needs theory stresses the prominent role needs play in how decisions are made, and states that each individual has the need for achievement, the need for power, and the need for affiliation. The extent to which these three needs are present characterizes an individual's behavior (McClelland, 1975) and, applied to advising, may determine the preferred type of advising relationship as well as the preferred advising outcome. Expectancy value theory purports that decision making, persistence, and performance is determined not by perceived needs but by an individual's self-efficacy for and value placed on an activity (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Implications of this theory for advising might include the importance of encouraging students to invest in the advising relationship by setting expectations for the advising experience and communicating its value.

Ecological theory focuses on the relationship between an individual and his or her surroundings. Astin (1993) and Tinto (1993) contend that human development is the result of interactions between an individual's characteristics and environmental conditions over the life span. Viewing advising from this perspective, it is one element of a student's educational environment and therefore has some influence on a student's academic success and satisfaction. At a minimum, the aforementioned theories should be considered when developing theoretical frameworks for academic advising.

Most advising researchers and practitioners recognize the critical nature of using theory to inform policy, practice, and research related to advising because it is the foundation on theory that allows explanation of the elements and outcomes associated with effective advising practice (Creamer, 2000). Ideally, the future of advising theoretical frameworks will hold an examination of theories relevant for advising and the endorsement or creation of a solid theory for advising.

Undergraduate Student Preferences for Academic Advising

Literature related to undergraduate student preferences for advising revolves around the developmental advising conceptual framework. Previous research studies have reported a range of student preferences with no clear consensus favoring either developmental or prescriptive advising. Current research studies have acknowledged that students may prefer different types of advising at different stages in their higher education. Thus, current research continues to focus on what types of advising students prefer, when students prefer these types of advising, and what factors are influencing these advising preferences.

Several studies have supported the notion that students prefer advising that is consistent with the developmental advising framework. Hornbuckle, Mahoney, and Borgard (1979) found that students perceived advisors as their personal link with the university. Furthermore, Larsen and Brown (1983) reported that 61% of students held the opinion that faculty should assist them with personal problems in addition to academic issues, and 67% of students thought faculty should facilitate interaction with the university bureaucracy on their behalf. To measure student preferences for advising

styles, Winston and Sandor (1984b) constructed a survey instrument known as the Academic Advising Inventory that measured student preferences for developmental versus prescriptive advising. The survey was administered to 306 undergraduate students at the University of Georgia, and the results showed that the majority of students, across all demographic strata, preferred a developmental advising relationship from enrollment through graduation. In order of preference, students rated teaching, learning how to register, problem solving, choosing a major, and goal-setting strategies as important issues that should be addressed in the advising experience (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). This broad view of advising was supported by Creeden (1990) who observed that students felt a need to discuss broad and substantive educational questions with advisors. In addition, Nadler and Nadler (1999) found a strong link between student perceptions of advising effectiveness, advisee comfort with seeing advisors more often, and advisee willingness to discuss personal as well as academic matters with advisors.

In support of prescriptive advising, Pascarella (1980) argued that many students considered an advisor's informational competency of greater value and importance than an advisor's personal qualities. In a study that echoed this more defined notion of advising, Beasley-Fielstein (1986) found that most students confined their perceptions of and expectations for advising to a narrow range of academic issues and concerns. Although students noted they would not reject advising that went beyond the scope of routine advising topics and dispensing accurate information, most students did not regard developmental advising as expected, practical, or necessary (1986). In her follow-up study 3 years later, Fielstein's (1989) findings once again demonstrated that students

preferred advising activities that represented a more prescriptive approach. Fielstein concluded that although students expressed a positive preference for a strong relationship with their advisors, most students did not want this relationship to encompass personal matters such as family or peer relationships.

Several studies concluded that students preferred alternate types of advising at least some of the time. Trombley (1984) found that students preferred advising have a dual role of providing both information and counseling. In addition, Trombley reported that many students desired different advising approaches at different stages of their college education. This possibility was further explored by Weir, Dickman, and Fuqua (2005) who determined that developmental advising and prescriptive advising are two distinct constructs. These researchers found that although different students preferred different advising styles, neither developmental advising nor prescriptive advising was preferred by all students all the time (Weir, Dickman, & Fuqua, 2005).

Several scholars have attempted to clarify which type of advising relationship most students preferred, and at what stage in their educational development they preferred a particular advising approach. Andrews, et al. (1987) found that student age and emotional expressiveness influenced the need for information, personal support, and amount of advisor contact. Other student characteristics, such as grades and gender, were identified by Alexitch (1997) who found these factors influenced whether students preferred advising that was developmental or prescriptive in nature. Smith's (2002) study of first-year students' advising expectations found that most first-year students expressed a preference for prescriptive advising; however, many students preferred a developmental

advising approach as they progressed in their education. Similarly, Mottarella, Fritzsche, and Cerabino (2004) measured college students' preferences for developmental and prescriptive advising styles, and investigated the elements of advising that students most valued. Mottarella et al. (2004) found that the depth and emotional nature of the advising relationship contributed more to student satisfaction with advising than the specific advising style employed by the advisor. Other factors that influenced the importance students attached to various advising functions were determined by Smith and Allen (2006) and included student characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, financial need, age/cohort, class level, and enrollment status. Interestingly, the advising functions typically associated with developmental advising fell in the middle of the preference rankings (Smith & Allen, 2006).

To understand advisor effectiveness based on student expectations, Propp and Rhodes (2006) attempted to identify the mental constructs underlying the expectations upper-level undergraduate students had for advising. These researchers surveyed 93 upper-level undergraduate students and established four constructs for advising: informing (prescriptive: imparting general academic information to students); apprising (prescriptive: imparting student-specific academic information to students); guiding (developmental: providing general guidance about academic direction and preparation for the future); and mentoring (developmental: providing individualized mentoring about academic direction and preparation for the future). Propp and Rhodes (2006) reported that students most preferred the construct of guiding, followed by (in order of preference) informing, apprising, and mentoring. Most students in this study expressed a preference

for both developmental and prescriptive advising at the general level, and preferred prescriptive advising at the individual level. Student expectations for developmental advising at the individual level were significantly less (Propp & Rhodes, 2006).

As Propp and Rhodes (2006) noted, previous research on student expectations for advising failed to produce a consensus on either the definitions of advising or the proper role of advisors. Because no clear student preference has been established for developmental or prescriptive advising, researchers have explored whether the level of educational development influences advising preferences. Recent research studies have attempted to ascertain what types of advising students prefer at which stages in their educational careers.

Graduate Student Preferences for Academic Advising

Advising is a crucial component of student success and persistence in graduate education (Baird, 1995; Polson, 1999; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Wong, Selke, & Thomas, 1995). Despite this acknowledgement, little attention has been devoted to the advising needs of graduate students (Gelso & Schlosser, 2001). The developmental advising framework has been constructed with traditional age undergraduate students in mind, and all of the research studies discussed in this literature review used undergraduate students as participants. Although the debate regarding undergraduate student preferences for the advising experience continues, the scholars involved are fortunate in that they have a body of literature from which to draw and frame future research inquiries. In contrast, the scant existing literature related to graduate advising

includes little theory and minimal research (Gelso & Schlosser, 2001; Hodgson & Simoni, 1995); moreover, graduate student preferences for advising remain unexplored.

However, the review of the literature did yield two possible theoretical frameworks for graduate advising: the mentoring-empowered model and the working alliance model. The mentoring-empowered model (Selke & Wong, 1993) is a combination of Erikson's identity theory and adult learning theory. This model holds that graduate students need mentoring, which is defined as a relationship between the advisor and the advisee based on acceptance, good communication, trust, openness, and mutual willingness to grow. The advising components recommended in the mentoring-empowered model parallel the roles of a graduate advisor identified by Winston et al. (1984), who identified five essential roles and functions of effective advisors: reliable information source, departmental socializer, advocate, role model, and occupational socializer. The mentoring-empowered model was further defined by Anderson and Shannon (1988) as

. . . a nurturing process in which a more skilled or experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development (p. 39).

The second possible theoretical framework for graduate advising is the working alliance model as proposed by Schlosser and Gelso (2001). As a change-inducing relationship, the working alliance is characterized by the cooperation, mutuality, and collaboration regarding the purpose of the work being conducted. Similar to the relationship between a supervisor and an employee, the working alliance model posits

that the graduate student advising relationship seeks to facilitate the learning and development of the advisee (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001).

Although scholars have suggested these two theoretical frameworks for graduate student advising, the frameworks have not yet generated additional research studies to test and explore their relevance and application to graduate students. In the absence of a theoretical framework and with limited research from which to draw, a developing research conversation is difficult to trace in the body of graduate advising literature. In her groundbreaking book *Handbook of Academic Advising*, Virginia Gordon (1992) wrote that the quality of the graduate student's performance and persistence to the final degree depends largely on the advisor-student relationship. In addition, several researchers have emphasized the role social support – specifically strong relationships with the academic advisor – play in mediating student stress as well as graduate student attrition (Goplerud, 1980; Hodgson & Simoni, 1995). Moreover, a substantial number of other scholars, including Baird (1995); Gordon (1992); Kowalik (1989); Pascarella & Terenzini (1991); and Smith and Valentine (1987), have affirmed the importance of the advising relationship in student success.

Yet, much of the existing graduate advising literature purports a lack of satisfaction with the graduate advising experience. Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain (1983) wrote that although advising is regarded by graduate students as the single most important aspect of the quality of their graduate experience, it is also the most disappointing aspect of their graduate experience. Miller and Newman (1996) found that although graduate students of higher education at the University of Alabama were

satisfied with advisor availability and benefited from their advisors in both educational and professional areas, they were disappointed in their overall advising experiences because they felt as though more time needed to be devoted to advising. A more recent study reflected student satisfaction with the advising in one psychology doctoral program. In Schlosser, Know, Moskovitz, and Hill's 2003 study interviewing 16 psychology doctoral students about their relationships with their graduate advisors, 10 of the 16 students were satisfied with their advising experience.

Two studies were discovered that addressed elements of the advising experience that current graduate students identified as contributing to their growth and success. Rimmer, Lammert, & McClain (1982) found that graduate students at Miami University indicated their primary needs are their future career and social interaction with their peers. Lan & Williams (2005) found that graduate students who felt advisors set high standards while being supportive reported the highest levels of perceived development in cognition, motivation, professional skills, satisfaction, and professional production.

After an exhaustive search to find literature related to graduate student preferences for advising, only one relevant research study was identified. Winston (1993) evaluated over 100 letters from graduate level dental students outlining what they looked for in advisors. The students noted a preference for advisors who have research interests in common with their own, advisors with whom they feel comfortable, and advisors that students feel are "successful."

This review of graduate advising literature reveals a lack of evolution and theoretical context. Little is known about graduate advising and graduate student

preferences for advising. Moreover, the majority of these studies were conducted with doctoral students and therefore do not consider the unique advising needs of terminal master's students. Clearly, the graduate advising field of research is young and needs to be developed.

Context for Research Study

Contributors to undergraduate advising research have recognized the need for understanding how theoretical frameworks influences research and practice. Without a solid theoretical framework or understanding of student preferences for advising, it is difficult to provide a context for understanding the meaning of the advising experience or evaluate its success. Undergraduate advising research has begun to address questions regarding how students' advising preferences influence their advising experience. Research findings have exposed the complexity of identifying advising preferences for diverse student bodies and challenged the traditional developmental advising framework.

Graduate student advising needs, and specifically terminal master degree student advising needs, have been overlooked to a large extent in advising literature and research. Many terminal master degree students immediately enter the work force as professionals. Thus, their advising needs may be quite different from undergraduate students who are planning to obtain an entry level job after graduation or attend graduate school. In order to develop a theoretical framework for advising graduate students and discern these potentially different advising needs, graduate student preferences for advising and the mental constructs that shape those preferences need to be examined. The results of such an examination will be a first step toward determining which theoretical frameworks are

appropriate for understanding graduate student constructs for advising. Perhaps the mentoring-empowered model, the working-alliance model, or the traditional developmental advising framework will provide the sharpest lens for viewing graduate student advising. However, additional theoretical and conceptual frameworks should be considered before endorsing a particular model or models for graduate student advising. Additionally, an understanding of graduate student constructs for the advising experience will enable graduate programs and scholars to enhance advising for graduate students.

In terms of a research methodology, qualitative inquiry will enable researchers to gain a thick and rich understanding of graduate student preferences for their advising experiences. Using qualitative methodologies, advising research can go beyond the “what” level to the “why” level. By giving students a voice, they can help advising researchers interpret the meaning behind quantitative data and discover the nuances of advising discourse. A qualitative case study of terminal master’s degree students’ mental constructs for finding meaning in the advising relationship will help address several gaps in advising research. Students will be able to share their experiences and insight in their own words, results will contribute to an understanding of graduate student expectations for the advising experience, and a foundation will be laid for developing a theoretical framework for advising graduate students.

Summary

This review of literature reveals the progress and struggles of the emerging field of academic advising inquiry. In order to grow as a field of inquiry and as a profession,

the next step for academic advising research is to take a step back in order to make a giant leap forward. As McGillin (2000) writes:

It is evident that the research agenda for academic advising must become a national priority. The very status of advising as a field and of roles, institutional support, training, and recognition will all depend on the generation of qualitative and quantitative research documenting what advisors do. (p. 374)

I have described the emergence of advising as a profession, the evolution of advising research, the research addressing undergraduate preferences for advising, the research addressing graduate student preferences for advising, and the context for this research study. Prior research studies exploring student constructs for understanding the advising experience focus on undergraduate students and find that students prefer developmental and prescriptive advising at different times throughout their advising experience. I believe the growing yet largely unexplored population of graduate students may have different advising preferences and different constructs for the advising experience. This study will examine master's of social work students' preferences for the advising experience to help advisors, advising administrators, and advising researchers improve the advising experience for graduate students. Moreover, I hope this study will move advising research closer to developing theories for graduate student advising.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative case study examines the academic advising ideas of a cohort of incoming MSW students for the purpose of understanding the constructs they bring to the advising experience. The boundaries of the case were the advising expectations of the incoming class of full-time MSW students at UNC-Chapel Hill. The research design was informed mainly by Stake (1995). Overall data collection techniques were influenced by Yin (2003), and overall data analysis techniques were informed by Hill et al. (1997), Maxwell (2005), and Merriam (1998). Specific data collection and analysis techniques consisted of Tipping (1998) for the focus groups, Seidman (2006) and Weiss (1994) for the in-depth interviews, and Winston and Sandor (1984b) for the survey. This review of research methodology will address the research questions, research design, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques employed in this study. In addition, issues of trustworthiness, limitations, and ethics will be discussed.

Research Questions

One central research question guided this research study: How do the mental constructs brought to academic advising by master's of social work students shape their construction of the advising experience?

Evolving from the central research question, the following supporting research questions were asked to identify the major trends in MSW student constructs for the academic advising experience:

- What prior experiences with and knowledge of academic advising do MSW students bring to the advising process?
- What are MSW student expectations for the role of the advisor in the advising relationship?
- What are MSW student expectations for the role of the advisee in the advising relationship?
- What are MSW student expectations for early, middle, and later advising experiences as they progress through the program?
- What impact do MSW students expect their advising experience will have?

Research Site

This study was conducted at the School of Social Work of a large southeastern research I institution, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill), where I have been on the staff as the Academic and Administrative Advisor for seven years. The School of Social Work houses an exemplary MSW program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, the accrediting body for MSW programs. The School of Social Work grants social work degrees at the master's and doctoral levels.

Three types of MSW programs are housed at the School of Social Work. Students with bachelor of social work degrees from accredited undergraduate BSW programs may

apply to the Advanced Standing program and complete a MSW in 12 months. The School of Social Work offers three distance education programs throughout the state. Students who wish to complete the MSW program on a part-time basis may apply to complete MSW degrees at Asheville, Triangle, or Winston-Salem over the course of three years. The full-time MSW program at the School of Social Work, the subject of this case study, has a traditional curriculum that consists of two years of full-time study. All three types of MSW programs incorporate both course work and field practicums.

Each year, approximately 75 full-time students enter the MSW program, and each new cohort of students is typically represented by 12% to 15% male students and 85% to 88% female students. Approximately 15% to 20% of incoming full-time students are students of color, and 75% to 80% are Caucasian. Generally, 60% of the students are North Carolina residents and 40% come from other states or other countries. On average, students accepted into the MSW program have an undergraduate grade point average of 3.49 on a 4.0 scale, and enter the program with a background of at least 40 months of paid social work experience (G. Cooper, personal communication, October 17, 2006).

The advising system at the School of Social Work is unique. Typically, full-time students at the School of Social Work are assigned three advisors when they enter the program: a faculty advisor, a field advisor, and an academic advisor. The faculty advisor's responsibilities are to guide the academic and professional development of students by orienting them to the mission and curriculum, assist advisees in integrating field and course work, and assist in decision-making about concentration, field of practice, and course selection. The role of the field advisor is to serve as a link between

the School of Social Work and the student's field placement. The academic advisor communicates with students regarding MSW curriculum policies and procedures, makes sure students' plans of study are consistent with curriculum requirements, and clears students for registration each semester (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work, 2006). The purpose of this advising system is to ensure students have access to advisors with expertise in each aspect of the curriculum.

The School of Social Work was chosen as the site for this study because it is a professional master's degree program where I was able to gain access to the incoming student body. I have developed professional relationships with the administrators and faculty of the School of Social Work based on considerable mutual respect. All have worked with me as a colleague, and the administration has been particularly supportive of my doctoral study and research efforts. After learning of my interest in conducting this study at the School of Social Work, the dean, associate dean for research, and associate dean for academic affairs enthusiastically supported my research effort pending IRB approval. The administrators were eager to hear the findings of this study and use them to strengthen the advising program at the School.

IRB Approval

I am a student at UNC-Greensboro School of Education and I conducted this study with participants who were students at UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. Thus, IRB approval needed to be obtained from both institutions. IRB approval was received from UNC-Greensboro on April 7, 2006, and IRB approval was attained from UNC-Chapel Hill on April 12, 2006.

Role of the Researcher

The roles of the researcher included what Stake (1995) calls interpreter, teacher, and constructivist. I attempted to interpret the case by recognizing, understanding and verifying new meanings of graduate student constructs for academic advising.

Additionally, I played the role of teacher and attempted to clearly articulate these new meanings as well as educate readers by sharing the thoughts and stories of participants. Stake (1995) defines constructivism as the gathering of interpretations (1995). As a constructivist, I made an effort to provide enough thick description to merit descriptions of the interviews and enable readers to draw conclusions relevant to their own situations or experiences.

Strauss (1987) writes, “Mine your experience, there is gold there!” (p. 11). As the researcher for this study, my experience with the MSW population and knowledge of the School of Social Work advising system was potentially valuable. Nonetheless, I needed to be careful in my role as the researcher to minimize bias and observer effect. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define observer effect as the presence of the researcher influencing the phenomenon being studied. In this case, that phenomenon was the advising perceptions of incoming full-time students at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

I took several precautions to guard against undue bias and observer effect. As Bogdan and Biklen (2003) wrote, “The data must bear the weight of any interpretation, so the researcher must constantly confront his or her own opinions and prejudices with the data” (p.33). These precautions included interviewing incoming MSW students before they entered the MSW program and were aware of my role, seeking feedback from

committee members and advising scholars, and critical self-reflection in a research journal throughout the study. To prevent the students from telling me what they thought I wanted to hear and to keep my biases from driving the conclusions of the focus groups and interviews, I emphasized to the students that their responses were anonymous and asked them to sign a consent form. I tried to maintain awareness of my effect on the students to interpret their responses in context. I spent a considerable amount of time with these participants and with the data derived during the course of this research study. I made every effort to maintain critical subjectivity, what Reason (1988) calls:

...a quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be swept away and overwhelmed by it; rather we rise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process. (p. 12)

By minimizing the risks of observer effect, my relationship with the students and their familiarity with the MSW program was a benefit rather than a hindrance to the study.

Research Philosophy and Design

After establishing the central and underlying research questions, a research methodology appropriate for responding to the questions about graduate student constructs for academic advising was designed. I chose the qualitative method because I did not know a priori what I would find, and because I wanted to generate thick descriptions with data rich in detail. I used the interpretive perspective that understands qualitative research as an activity where the researcher is located in the natural world, observes it, and makes it visible to others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I used a phenomenological approach, attempting to understand the meaning of academic advising

for MSW students from an emic, or insider's, perspective (Merriam, 1998). The intent of a phenomenological approach is to set aside personal views to see the experience for itself (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The case study method, a detailed examination of one setting or subject (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), allowed me to accomplish this. Specifically, Stake's (1995) instrumental case study method was used. Instrumental case studies focus on a particular case to gain a general understanding of a phenomenon and insight into the research question being asked (1995). Although I was interested in learning about this particular case and understood that results would not necessarily generalize to other similar cases, I wanted to use it as an opportunity to learn more about terminal master students' constructs for academic advising.

Once I decided the research question guiding this study called for an instrumental case study and that the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work would be an ideal research site, I weighed the data collection techniques that would accurately address the research questions while maintaining trustworthiness in the study. I immediately decided in-depth interviews would best achieve the level of detail and thick description I sought to give graduate student constructs for advising a strong voice. Informed by my knowledge and experience of the struggle of the advising profession and field of inquiry to establish credibility, I was keenly aware of the need to conduct a trustworthy study. Therefore, I decided that although Yin's (2003) approach to case studies recommended more structure than I wished to impose, his suggestions for employing multiple sources of data and maintaining a chain of evidence were important steps to preserving trustworthiness. Thus, I incorporated a well-known advising survey instrument (the AAI)

in the study as a method to supplement the qualitative findings and to saturate the data source.

Data analysis was informed by Maxwell (2005), Merriam (1998), and Hill et al. (1997). Maxwell (2005) offered an interactive approach to qualitative studies. The notion of interactive research and ongoing data analysis emphasizes the evolving nature of research and leaves room for existing theory, research, and experiential knowledge to form a conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2005). Further, Merriam (1998) recommended placing data into categories that reflect answers to the research questions. She proposed identifying categories that are exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitive to what is in the data, and conceptually congruent to what is in the data. A technique for reporting qualitative data analysis used in Consensual Qualitative Research (Hill et al., 1997) fit this study well, and was adopted for reporting findings. After consulting with members of my dissertation committee, I developed a final research plan detailing my research design and techniques.

This research study was conducted in several phases. The first phase involved conducting two focus groups to refine the interview and survey questions. The second phase included simultaneous collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. Seventeen participants were interviewed to elicit student perspectives of advising constructs for MSW students. In addition, a survey evaluating advising preferences was distributed to all (n=80) incoming full-time students. After analyzing and comparing data collected in the interviews and the survey, a second interview was conducted with each of

the original 17 interview participants. The second interviews served to corroborate and qualify the data and patterns found in the initial interviews and survey.

Data Collection Process

Focus Groups

After IRB approval was obtained, I began the data collection by facilitating two focus groups with current full-time MSW students at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. The purpose of conducting these focus groups was to pilot test the interview protocol and survey questions to determine where revisions might be necessary or helpful. The planning, implementation, and facilitation processes of these pilot focus groups were informed by Tipping (1998).

Focus Group Protocols. Consistent with Tipping (1998), I developed draft protocols that explained the purpose of the session, detailed the ground rules for discussion, encouraged participants to become acquainted, asked initial general prompts such as describing a viewpoint or giving an opinion, and asked follow-up questions that requested more specific descriptions. The two focus groups used different protocols.

The first focus group protocol contained questions from the draft of the protocol for the first individual in-depth interviews (see Appendix A). The second focus group protocol asked participants to take the MSW Academic Advising Inventory, which was a revised version of the AAI. After completing the inventory, participants were asked to respond to the open-ended questions taken from the draft survey instrument. In addition, this focus group protocol asked participants to reflect on the questions in the sections of the survey that I constructed specifically for this study (i.e., the objective questions in

Part II of the survey and the open-ended questions in Part III of the survey). The complete protocol for the second focus group is included in Appendix A.

Participant selection. In a deviation from the original dissertation proposal, all current full-time MSW students received both an e-mail invitation and a memo in their campus mailboxes inviting them to participate in the focus groups (see Appendix B). The decision was made to extend the invitation to participate to all students to ensure sufficient response because the focus groups took place during a busy time (the end of the spring 2006 semester). The invitation advertised that pizza and salad would be served at each focus group. Of the 235 students who were sent invitations, nine students volunteered to participate in the first focus group, and seven students volunteered to participate in the second focus group. The first focus group (n=9) consisted of seven females and two males. Seven of the students were Caucasian, one student was African American, and one student was Asian. The second focus group (n=7) was comprised of all female students. Four of the students were Caucasian, one student was African American, and one student was Hispanic.

Data collection. The first focus group took place at 5:00 p.m. on Monday April 24, 2006 and the second focus group took place at 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday April 25, 2006. Both focus groups were conducted in a conference room at the School of Social Work on a floor of the building where classes are rarely held. The focus groups were scheduled at times when current students were likely to be on campus but not likely to be in class. I served as the facilitator for each focus group. Each focus group was approximately 90 minutes in length and began after participants had an opportunity to help themselves to

pizza and salad. I facilitated the focus groups according to the protocols previously described (see Appendix A). I began each group by introducing myself and reviewing the consent form with participants (see Appendix C). Each participant signed two copies of the consent form; one copy was returned to me, and the participant kept one copy. After consent was obtained, I reviewed the ground rules for the focus group, asked participants to introduce themselves, and began asking discussion questions related to the lines of inquiry for each focus group.

Both focus groups were audiotape recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy. The tape recorder for each focus group was turned on after participants had signed the consent forms. In addition, I took detailed notes during each focus group. The audio tape of the first focus group was not entirely audible, and I relied heavily on my detailed notes and memory to write the transcript. Both focus group transcripts were sent electronically to participants, and revisions were made based on their recollection of their comments and the discussion. Creswell (2003) called this process “member checking.” Analytic memos were added to the transcripts based on notes I made during the focus groups as well as my reflections after the completion of the focus groups.

To conduct the focus groups, I followed guidelines suggested in a well-known focus group text (Tipping, 1998) and consulted with an expert in focus group facilitation from the School of Social Work. As the facilitator, I served as a moderator and carefully limited my comments (Tipping, 1998). I ensured that all participants understood the purpose of the focus group as well as the ground rules for the discussion. Furthermore, I tried to make participants feel comfortable and able to freely share their ideas, I remained

nonjudgmental and neutral, I kept the discussion focused, and I monitored the time and pace of the discussion to ensure each question in the protocol was discussed (Tipping, 1998).

First Interviews

As I planned and conducted the interviews, I utilized Seidman's (2006) guidelines for conducting in-depth interviews and Weiss's (1994) principles for interacting with participants during an interview. Seidman's (2006) interviewing method is grounded in the phenomenological tradition of three distinct, thematic interviews designed to question meanings of experience. Although I conducted two rounds of in-depth interviews instead of three, I followed Seidman's (2006) interviewing approach of spending enough time with participants to put their thoughts and behaviors in context and find their meaning. The interviews were semi-structured to ensure exploration of the same topics with participants while allowing the flexibility to explore individual experiences (Seidman, 2006).

First Interview Protocol. The study was designed to acquire a well developed understanding of incoming MSW students' preconstruted ideas about the graduate advising experience and to learn how they construct meaning for what they want to learn or take away from MSW advising. The interview questions flowed from the research questions and centered around five areas: general understanding of academic advising, advisor preferences, advisee preferences, the evolution of the advising relationship, and the envisioned effects of the MSW advising experience (see Appendix A). The protocol

was finalized after testing questions in the focus groups and consultation with members of my dissertation committee.

Participant selection. Potential participants were selected by obtaining the list of fall 2006 incoming MSW students from the director of admissions. Purposeful sampling (Seidman, 2006) was used to identify 25 potential participants who represented the demographics of the incoming student cohort. Interviewing both typical and atypical incoming students enabled me to test potential negative cases and to saturate the data while also capturing as many rich insights and experiences from participants as possible.

Demographic characteristics used to identify participants included gender, race, residency, and age. After potential participants were identified, they were invited to participate in two interviews. The potential participants were sent an e-mail on May 18, 2006 that included a description of the person conducting the study, the reason for the study, the sponsor of the study, how their name was identified, why they were selected, the purpose for the interviews, what would be asked of them, that confidentiality was guaranteed, and that the interviews would be recorded (see Appendix B). The invitation also noted that participants would receive an incentive of \$30 for completion of their study involvement. If a potential participant agreed to be interviewed, he or she responded by e-mail to arrange a date, time, and place for the first interview. Seventeen of the 25 students who were invited to be part of the study agreed to participate in the interviews. Table 3.1 illustrates the close correlation between the demographics of the incoming full-time student cohort and the demographics of the interview participants. See

Appendix D for a complete description of each interview participant's demographic information.

Table 3.1

Interview Participant Demographics Compared to Incoming Student Demographics

Incoming Student Demographics	80 Incoming Students		25 Invited Participants		17 Actual Participants	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female	70	88	23	92	16	94
Male	10	13	2	0.08	1	0.04
Caucasian	70	88	23	92	15	88
Minority	10	13	2	0.08	2	11
In-State	56	70	18	72	12	71
Out-of-State	24	30	7	28	5	29
Less Than or Equal to Age 23	24	30	7	28	3	18
Between 24 and 28	40	50	13	52	11	65
More Than or Equal to Age 29	16	20	5	20	3	18

Data collection. As participants responded to my e-mail invitation, I arranged a date, time, and place for each interview. Each student who volunteered to participate was assigned a unique participant number. The interviews were conducted between May 23, 2006 and June 7, 2006. Four interviews were conducted in a conference room at the School of Social Work, nine interviews were conducted in the home of the participant, two interviews were conducted at a quiet public place (i.e., a library and a coffee house), one interview was conducted at the participant's place of employment, and one interview was conducted via telephone because the participant lived in another part of the country. The same protocol was followed for each interview. I began interviews by introducing

myself and thanking the participants for their willingness to participate in the study. Next, participants were given two copies of the consent form that included giving consent for the first interview, second interview, and completion of the survey (see Appendix C) and asked to sign both copies. The consent forms assured participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. I retained one copy of each consent form and asked participants to keep a copy for their records. The participant who was interviewed via telephone received the consent form via e-mail, sent a signed hard copy to me in the mail, and kept a copy for herself. After reviewing the consent form with participants, I turned on both a digital audio recorder and a tape recorder as a back-up recording. The telephone interview was audio recorded with one recorder, the digital audio recorder.

After an initial introduction, reviewing the consent form, and turning on the audio recorders, I noted the date, start time of the interview, and the participant's identification number. I then began posing the interview questions to the participants as outlined in the first interview protocol for the first-round interviews. Although I followed the lines of inquiry for each interview, I followed "markers" to encourage the participants to elaborate on their responses and provide detail (Weiss, 1994). During and immediately after each interview, I made handwritten notes that included participant responses as well as comments or thoughts that occurred to me during the interviews. Each interview ended with demographic questions. I noted the time the interview ended before turning off the audio recorders. The date, time, and place for the second interview were arranged at the close of the first interview. The average length for each interview was approximately one hour, and the interim between interviews was approximately 6 weeks.

Funds provided through a NACADA grant (in support of this research) enabled me to hire a transcriptionist to convert the audio recordings to text. I gave each interview recording to the transcriptionist as I completed the interviews. Confidentiality was not breached because participant numbers rather than names were used while the audio tapes were recording. Mid-way through the first round of interviews, the transcriptionist for this study became ill for a week. To stay on schedule, I sent three interview recordings to a transcription company, escriptionist.com, and received typed transcripts within 48 hours.

After all the interviews were conducted and transcribed, I listened to each interview recording while reviewing the transcription to ensure accuracy. Following Weiss's (1994) suggestions, I used my handwritten notes and reflections to record analytic memos within the transcripts. I sent the transcripts (without the analytic memos) to participants via e-mail and asked them to review the transcripts for accuracy and intent. Each participant confirmed accuracy of the transcript. Several participants asked me to make minor revisions such clarifying the role of their undergraduate advisor and correcting the grammar they used in their responses.

Survey

To inform interview findings, a survey was distributed to all incoming full-time MSW students (n=80). The survey was modeled on the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) and allowed me to analyze MSW student advising preferences (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). The AAI survey was originally developed to measure undergraduate student perceptions of advising activities and undergraduate student preferences for advising as

either prescriptive or developmental (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). By using a modified version of this survey, I sought to learn about graduate student preferences for advising activities as well as graduate student preferences for prescriptive versus developmental advising. In addition, I was interested in comparing graduate student preferences for advising with the current research related to undergraduate preferences for advising.

MSW-Academic Advising Inventory. The AAI was developed for undergraduate students to evaluate their advising experiences. The AAI consists of four parts: Part I addresses how students and their advisors approach advising; Part II gauges how frequently students engage in specific tasks or activities with their advisors; Part III asks students to rate their overall satisfaction with their advising experience; and Part IV consists of several demographic questions (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). Because the AAI was intended to assess an advising experience rather than expectations of advising, some revisions were necessary. The revised survey is called the MSW Academic Advising Inventory (MSW-AAI). Although the MSW-AAI was not the primary method of data collection for this study, its inclusion illuminated and informed the data collected through the in-depth interviews.

Participants completed a revised Part I and the original Part IV of the AAI. Parts II and III of the original AAI were not used in this study. Revisions to Part I included adding “It is important to me that. . .” to each of the 14 questions in Part I of the AAI to accurately assess student expectations for advising rather than to evaluate an advising experience. In addition, I added a section of 11 questions to the MSW-AAI that addressed advising interests specific to MSW graduate students. These questions were modeled on

the questions in Part I and comprised Part II of the MSW-AAI. Each question in Parts I and II provided the participant with a choice between two response statements: One statement represented a preference for developmental advising, and the other statement represented a preference for prescriptive advising. Participants were instructed to choose the statement that best described their ideal MSW academic advisor. Next, participants were asked to rate the importance of the statement using an 8-point Likert scale that ranged from *very important* to *slightly important*. The developmental and prescriptive ends of the item continuum were randomly placed on the left and right side of each pair in Part II, as they had been in Part I by Winston and Sandor (1984) to prevent the occurrence of a response set.

In addition, I added seven open-ended questions, which comprised the third section of the MSW-AAI. These open-ended questions provided participants an opportunity to elaborate on their understanding of and preferences for the advising experience. The open-ended questions in Part III were not included in the MSW-AAI completed by interview participants because they had already responded to these questions in their first interviews. The revised questions in Part II and Part III of the MSW-AAI were pilot-tested for clarity and relevance to MSW students through the focus groups, and were reviewed by several members of my dissertation committee and administrators at the School of Social Work.

Part IV of the MSW-AAI consisted of four demographic questions. Students were asked to identify their gender, cultural/ethnic background, age, and previous education. A final question asked survey participants to provide their contact information if they were

willing to be contacted by the researcher to obtain feedback after data collection and initial data analysis were complete. The final draft of the MSW-AAI is included in Appendix A. Permission to use the AAI with these revisions for this study was granted by (a) Assistant to the Provost at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey Tom Grites, who is an academic advising scholar and was involved in development of the AAI, and by (b) Marsha Miller, assistant director of programs for NACADA (T. Grites, personal communication, January 16, 2006; M. Miller, personal communication, January 12, 2006). Karen Blackwell, institutional researcher at UNC-Greensboro, developed the online survey instrument (K. Blackwell, personal communication, January 25, 2006).

In terms of credibility, the AAI has been called a nationally normed instrument (Smith, 2002) and the most widely used research instrument in advising research (Daller, Creamer, & Creamer, 1997; Mottarella, Fritzsche, & Cerabino, 2004). Herndon, Kaiser, and Creamer (1996) used the AAI in their study because of its known high construct validity and reliability (1996). In terms of the AAI's reliability, Winston and Sandor (1984b) reported that Cronbach's alpha, conducted to determine internal consistency, revealed an alpha coefficient of .78. Weir, Dickman, and Fuqua (2005) focused their research on answering the question of whether the items in the AAI reflected two distinct constructs: that is, developmental advising and prescriptive advising. Their analysis supported two separate constructs and used Cronbach's alpha to find internal consistency of .79 and .80. In terms of validity, Winston and Sandor (1984b) estimated construct validity by comparing scores of students who were expected to prefer different styles of academic advising. As expected, the groups perceived advising differently and validity

was confirmed (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). Although my revisions to the AAI have not been subjected to rigorous tests for reliability and validity, the minor revisions I made have face validity as verified by several experts in survey research and academic advising who reviewed the original survey instrument and my modified sections. In addition, Tom Grites was confident the revisions I made to the AAI were minor and would not lessen its credibility (T. Grites, personal communication, January 16, 2006).

Participant selection. Initially, I intended to survey only incoming full-time students who had not participated in an in-depth interview. However, after consulting with my dissertation committee I decided to send an e-mail to the entire class of incoming full-time MSW students inviting them to complete the MSW-AAI (see Appendix B). This decision was made to increase the sample size of survey participants and strengthen the findings as well as to allow me to compare the responses of interview and survey-only participants.

Data collection. An e-mail inviting the incoming full-time MSW students who had not participated in the interviews to complete the MSW-AAI was sent on June 1, 2006; e-mails inviting interview participants to complete the survey was sent on June 8, 2006, after the first round of in-depth interviews were complete. The electronic invitation to participate included an explanation of the purpose of the study, and included a link for students to give their consent to participate electronically. Students were assured that their survey results would be confidential and that all study results would be reported only as aggregate trends and observations (see Appendix B). The invitation encouraged students to print out a copy of the e-mail for their records. Once students gave their

consent, they were directed to a Web site where they could complete the online survey. Survey-only participants were directed to complete all four parts of the MSW-AAI, and interview-only participants were directed to complete a three part survey that did not include the open-ended questions.

As of June 9, 2006, there were 33 survey responses. A final reminder e-mail was sent on June 20, 2006, which yielded a final sample of 58 incoming full-time students who responded and completed the survey. The survey response rate was 73%. Table 3.2 illustrates the demographics of the incoming class compared to the demographics of the students who completed the survey.

Table 3.2

Survey Participant Demographics Compared to Incoming Student Demographics

Incoming Student Demographics	80 Incoming Students		58 Survey Participants	
	#	%	#	%
Female	70	88	50	86
Male	10	13	8	14
Caucasian	70	88	52	90
Minority	10	13	6	10
Less Than or Equal to Age 23	24	30	16	28
Between 24 and 28	40	50	32	55
More Than or Equal to Age 29	16	20	10	17

Second Interviews

Second Interview Protocol. Based on my review of data collected in the first round of interviews and the results of the survey, I developed a protocol for the second round of interviews based on questions that emerged from the preliminary data. The

second round of interviews focused on gaining a deeper understanding of incoming student constructs for the MSW advising experience through elaboration and clarification of initial pattern findings. To develop the second interview protocol, I tentatively identified patterns, and tested these patterns in the second interviews. The protocol was developed based on these preliminary findings and in consultation with Dr. Ponder, my dissertation advisor. The lines of inquiry included questions related to the survey, questions related to the first interviews, and questions related to the initial research questions. See Appendix A to review the final protocol for the second round of in-depth interviews.

Participants. The second in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the original 17 interview participants. There was no attrition in the sample.

Data collection. The second round of in-depth interviews was conducted between July 5, 2006 and July 24, 2006. Five interviews were conducted in a conference room at the School of Social Work, seven interviews were conducted in the participant's home, two interviews were conducted in quiet, public places (i.e., a public library and a coffee house), one interview was conducted at the participant's place of employment, and two interviews were conducted via telephone. The process for conducting each interview was identical to the process for the first round of interviews in terms of greeting participants, audio recording each interview, and asking questions related to preferences for academic advising. The two principal differences of the second interview were that consent forms did not need to be signed and the interview questions followed lines of inquiry different from those of the first interview. The criterion for judging completion of the participant

interviews was *saturation of data*, that is, the point in the study at which I began to hear the same information reported (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994). Participants were asked if they would agree to provide feedback through a follow-up contact, which would take place after data collection and initial data analysis were completed. All participants were willing to be contacted. After turning off the audio recorders and ending the interview, each participant was given an inducement of \$30 for participating in the study. The average length of the second interview was 50 minutes.

Using the same process described for the first round of interviews, the audio recordings of the second in-depth interviews were given to the transcriptionist after each interview was completed. As previously described, participant confidentiality was not at risk because participant identification numbers were used in the recordings rather than names. Each participant was e-mailed an electronic copy of the transcript of his or her interview, and asked to review the transcript for accuracy and intent. Each participant confirmed the accuracy of the transcription. I added my analytic memos to file copies of the transcripts that were later reconciled with participant confirmed transcripts.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analyses were conducted using techniques suggested by Hill et al. (1997), Maxwell (2005), Merriam (1998), Stake (1995), and Yin (2003). Consistent with Maxwell (2005), research analysis was interactive, using design components with implications for one another. The focus groups had implications for the first in-depth interviews and survey, and the first in-depth interviews and survey had implications for

the second in-depth interviews. Using this strategy recommended by Maxwell (2005) and Stake (1995), data collection and analysis was simultaneous and ongoing, allowing the focus of the research to change in response to the data as it unfolded. To analyze data, I constructed categories to identify major patterns and interpret data (Merriam, 1998). A qualitative data analysis technique called Consensual Qualitative Research (Hill et al., 1997) was used to label the frequency of categories and find patterns in the data. Another goal of data analysis was to establish what Yin (2003) termed a “chain of evidence,” a process designed to increase the reliability of a case study so that, if desired, an external reader could follow the derivation of data from the initial research questions to the ultimate conclusions.

Focus Groups

To analyze the focus group data, I imported both focus group transcripts into ATLAS.ti as a hermeneutic unit. I used open coding to develop categories as they emerged from the data. Many comments were unique to a single individual, and they were not assigned categories (Tipping, 1998). I made every effort to be conscious of my effect on the students to interpret their responses in context.

Though coding the focus group transcripts was helpful, I relied heavily on my analytic memos and intuition as I analyzed the data. Because the purpose of the focus groups was to refine the interview and survey questions, the responses given by participants were less relevant than how the participants experienced the questions and how the questions seemed to “flow” as I asked them. However, I paid particular attention

to participants' responses to the questions that asked for reflection and comment on specific interview and survey questions.

The focus groups provided the opportunity to test and revise interview and survey questions as needed. As expected, the focus groups generated new ideas as well as some unanticipated responses. Several changes were made to both the interview protocol and the revised survey questions that had been added to the MSW-AAI. Based on the findings from the first focus group, the interview protocol was reorganized. For example, questions about expectations for advisees in the advising experience were placed following the questions about preferences for the advisor. In addition, new questions that emerged from the focus groups were added to the protocol, including, "What do you think should be in the job description of an advisor?" and "What do you think should be in the job description of an advisee?" I spontaneously asked these questions during the focus group and they seemed to help participants clarify their preferences for advisors and advisees, and to think of their preferences from a new perspective. Another protocol change included rewording the question that asked about evolution of advising preferences from "What are your preferences for the early, middle, and later advising experiences as you progress through the program?" to "Can you think of how your advising needs might change or evolve as you progress through the program?" This change was necessary because participants had a difficult time responding to the question until it was reworded and clarified.

Several survey questions were also revised or reformatted based on the findings of the second focus group. For example, several focus group members misunderstood the

survey directions for the set of questions that required a two-part response: first, a response statement was chosen, and then the participant had to rate the importance of the selected statement. To clarify the directions and emphasize the questions required a two-part response, underlining was added to the instructions. Other revisions to survey questions included rewriting some of the questions in Part II of the MSW-AAI to ensure the two response statements listed for each question were parallel.

First Interviews and Preliminary Analysis

Preliminary interview analysis began while the interviews were being conducted with handwritten notes and comments that were later incorporated into the interview transcriptions. These memos included theoretical, personal, and methodological notes to reflect on the interviews and help piece together data. Afterward, these member-checked interview transcripts with analytic memos were imported into an ATLAS.ti as a new hermeneutic unit. The transcripts were coded first by line of inquiry (i.e., general understanding of academic advising, advisor preferences, advisee preferences, the evolution of the advising relationship, and the envisioned effects of the advising experience) and second by categories that emerged in each line of questioning (Merriam, 1998). I looked for recurring categories and meanings of statements to identify patterns that were present in the majority of data (Merriam, 1998). Themes that occurred in more than half of the participant responses were considered preliminary patterns. These preliminary patterns were compared to findings from the MSW-AAI and subsequently explored in the second interviews for clarification and elaboration.

Survey

Survey participants were tagged as either interview participants or survey-only participants. Data collected from the 58 MSW-AAI participants were imported into a SAS database maintained by Karen Blackwell, the creator of the online MSW-AAI. Each survey response was included in data analysis. The first step in data analysis was to recode the items in which the developmental and prescriptive ends of the continuum had been reversed. Ms. Blackwell prepared descriptive statistics that consisted of frequency and means reports. She included separate frequency and means reports for interview participants, survey-only participants, and overall (combined) participants. I also asked Ms. Blackwell to run a *t*-test to determine whether there were significant differences between the responses of interview participants and survey-only participants. In addition, I consulted Winston and Sandor's (1984b) assessment scales. These scales allowed me to find an overall developmental-prescriptive advising score and rate students' advising preferences by category (e.g., personalizing education, academic decision making, and selecting courses; Winston & Sandor, 1984b).

Qualitative data collected in the open-ended survey questions were transcribed and analyzed in the same manner as the first in-depth interviews. Open-ended survey data were imported into ATLAS.ti and sorted into lines of inquiry; these data were further sorted into categories that occurred in each line of inquiry to identify patterns and meanings of statements. Because the sample size was both relatively small and homogenous, I was unable to aggregate the data and use an analysis of variance to look for demographic differences (M. Davenport, personal communication, September 27,

2006). Results of the MSW-AAI data analysis were compared to the categories and patterns identified in the first in-depth interviews and contributed to the creation of the protocol for the second in-depth interviews.

Second Interviews and Final Analysis

As with the first in-depth interviews, analysis of the second in-depth interviews began with handwritten notes made during and immediately after the interviews. These notes were later incorporated into the transcriptions as analytic memos. Transcriptions were imported into ATLAS.ti and coded by line of inquiry (i.e., questions related to the survey, questions related to the first interviews, and questions related to the initial research questions) and then by categories that emerged in each line of questioning (Merriam, 1998). I looked for recurring categories and meanings of statements to find patterns that occurred in the majority of data (Merriam, 1998).

Faced with the task of comparing and contrasting two sets of semi-structured in-depth interviews as well as closed and open-ended survey data, I realized that ATLAS.ti was not an effective method of final data analysis. Although ATLAS.ti helped me identify overall categories and themes, the method became too cumbersome when trying to make multiple comparisons. For example, ATLAS.ti was unwieldy when comparing responses from different participants to a single interview question as well as each participant's responses to all of the questions. I began to feel as though the qualitative software was distancing me from the data, and making it difficult to discern the context and easier to lose valuable details (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, after consulting with Dr. Ponder, I decided to construct a data matrix to supplement my use of ATLAS.ti. The

matrix included a brief summary of each participant's response to each question. Key phrases or thoughts were kept in the participant's own words and the text was made bold.

For the final data analysis, I used the data matrix to compare each participant's response to each interview and open-ended survey question. For each question, first I looked for the categories of responses that occurred. Then, I named each category and assigned it a color. Next, I located each instance where the category occurred for that particular question and changed its font to the corresponding color. Finally, I determined how frequently each category appeared. The visual display of the data in the matrix was a valuable tool in data analysis and kept me close to the voices speaking through the data (see Appendix E for an excerpt from this data matrix).

When reporting data findings, I used frequency ranges rather than frequency counts. Following the data analysis approach used in Consensual Qualitative Research (Hill et al., 1997), I defined four categories of frequency: (a) general: occurring in 90% or more of the participants; (b) typical: applying to at least 50% of participants but fewer than 90% of participants; (c) variant: applying to at least 20% but less than 50% of participants; and (d) rare: applying to less than 20% of participants. These categories allowed me to avoid numerical calculations in qualitative data analysis while providing a structure for identifying patterns. Typical and general categories were considered patterns in the data.

After data collection and analysis were complete, interview participants who agreed to the voluntary follow-up contact for the final phase of the study were asked to review the key findings and give feedback to validate the identified patterns. Each

interview participant agreed to participate in the final phase of the study. Therefore, each interview participant was sent an electronic copy of the final patterns and responses to the research questions. The purpose of distributing these findings was to share with participants what I heard them tell me about their advising experiences and expectations, and to ask participants to confirm the patterns identified in the study or explain how they would change the patterns. Three participants e-mailed responses to me, and each participant affirmed the findings were consistent with their expectations for the MSW advising experience.

A major goal of this final analysis was to build a logical chain of evidence that linked each source of data to the conclusions (Yin, 2003). To this end, the focus groups informed the interview and survey questions; the interviews and survey informed the second interviews; and all of the data collected in the first interviews, survey, and second interviews were included in the final data analysis. Analytic memos and journal notes made throughout the course of the study provided evidence of simultaneous and ongoing data analysis.

Trustworthiness

I took a series of steps to uphold the trustworthiness of this research study and the findings identified by my analyses. Guidelines for trustworthiness in qualitative studies of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were employed in this study to maximize credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of data collection and data analysis.

Credibility

Methods for maintaining credibility in this study consisted of naturalistic generalization through prolonged research in the field, consent forms, member checks, use of critical colleagues and triangulation. Prolonged engagement was achieved by conducting two in-depth interviews with each interview participant. During the course of the two interviews, I became familiar with the participants and thus reduced the possibility of misunderstanding their comments and intentions. I made every effort to present myself as nonthreatening, understanding, and nonjudgmental as the interviewees shared their thoughts. Consent forms assured participants that their responses would be anonymous and confidential.

Member checking, the process of using participants to review the researcher's recording and interpretation of their contributions (Stake, 1995), was utilized in several ways throughout the study. The focus groups served as a member check in the development of the interview and survey questions. Another member check was made when I listened to each interview tape with the transcript in front of me to check the transcript for accuracy. In addition, I asked each participant to review her or his interview transcript for accuracy. The second interviews also played an important role in checking the patterns that arose in the first interviews and the survey results. Finally, interview participants were given an opportunity to provide feedback on the general findings of the study when they were asked to review and confirm the study findings.

Feedback was sought from critical colleagues throughout the course of the research study. I discussed my focus group data collection and analysis techniques with a

faculty member at the School of Social Work who specializes in conducting and analyzing focus groups. I consulted with several of my dissertation committee members as I finalized the protocols for the interviews and the revised sections of the MSW-AAI, and as I analyzed the interview and MSW-AAI data.

Triangulation of data was accomplished by conducting a series of two interviews with each interview participant and through anonymous objective and open-ended survey data. High levels of disclosure and multiple data sources provided opportunities to test findings. Some may question why faculty, administrators, and others were not interviewed or surveyed as part of this study. The sample was limited to students because the principal goal of the study was to listen to the voices of incoming full-time MSW students to understand how they find meaning in the advising experience.

Transferability

Transferability was addressed through purposeful sampling in the interviews, surveying the entire incoming class of full-time MSW students, and including thick description. Interview participants were purposely chosen to represent the demographics of the incoming class of incoming full-time MSW students. Purposeful sampling ensured both typical and nontypical incoming students were represented in the study. The opportunity to survey nearly the entire incoming MSW full-time student population also added to transferability and saturation of the data. Thick descriptions provided grounded confirmation of research findings in statements from participants. A detailed account of the research process also improved the transferability of the study.

Dependability

To increase dependability, I created an audit trail to describe how the different phases of the study informed one another, to depict my coding strategies, to detail how I triangulated data sources, and to document my consultation with peers. I established a chain of evidence by documenting my findings at each phase of the study, and by describing how I arrived at those findings in my analytic memos, research notes, and descriptions of data analysis techniques. I outlined my coding strategies in this chapter and in my research journal. The use of triangulation and consulting with critical colleagues also reinforced the dependability for the study. Reliability of the MSW-AAI was strengthened by checking my revisions to the survey with advising and research experts.

Confirmability

Confirmability, or objectivity, was a goal throughout the study. Triangulation of data sources, consultation with external auditors of the data, acknowledgement of researcher biases, and consistent critical reflection ensured the research process was rigorous and the findings were based on sound data analysis. Dr. Ponder and several other members of my dissertation committee served as external auditors and peer reviewers of the data collection and data analysis techniques employed in the study. Self-disclosing my biases in analytic memos and keeping a research journal enabled me to critically reflect on my biases and limit their influence on the study.

Potential Limitations

Despite considerable efforts to ensure trustworthiness in this research study, there were several limitations that must be acknowledged. These limitations included combining research methodologies, the homogeneity of participants, and generalizability. This section addresses each limitation as well as strategies employed to mitigate the limitation when possible.

Combining Research Methodologies

I incorporated a quantitative survey in this study to inform the data collected in the qualitative in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews provided thick description and a detailed understanding of the 17 interview participants. Distributing the MSW-AAI afforded an opportunity to survey the entire incoming full-time MSW student population and to saturate the data set. When qualitative and quantitative research methodologies are combined, analyzing two different types of data can be difficult to navigate and trustworthiness can be compromised (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Despite this risk, findings were credible because I endeavored to remain faithful to the different strategies for ensuring the trustworthiness of each form of data.

Homogeneity of Participants

Because the class of incoming full-time MSW students was relatively homogenous, the interview and survey participants were also homogenous. Although the demographic variance of the incoming class was represented fairly in the demographic variance of the interview and survey participants, the incoming class was neither large

enough nor diverse enough to compare advising preferences of participants based on gender, race, age, or undergraduate degree.

Generalizability

Generalizability is often mentioned as a limitation of qualitative case study research. This study strove for what Maxwell (2005) called internal generalizability. By taking measures to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, this study is internally generalizable. In contrast, external generalizability is difficult to establish without following a true experimental research design. Most often, qualitative researchers strive for internal generalizability rather than external generalizability (Maxwell, 2005). Although the results of this case study may add to the understanding of student constructs for academic advising at other terminal master's degree programs, the aim of the study was to uncover student constructs for academic advising for this specific instrumental case, the UNC-Chapel Hill MSW program.

Ethical Issues

This study posed no serious ethical problems. Potential risks to interview participants were not apparent; however, there was a possibility that the interview could become an intervention. For example, after participating in the study students may have had a more conscious understanding of academic advising and their preferences for advising approaches. Thus, a student participant may have been more inclined to discuss the advising relationship with his or her advisor or to prepare for a meeting with his or her advisor more thoroughly. This conscious understanding may have given interview

participants a slight advantage over noninterview participants. Risks to survey participants were minimal.

My role as academic advisor should not have influenced the participation of the students because I contacted them after they enrolled in the School of Social Work and before they came to campus. Thus, my status as their academic advisor was not relevant. Student participation was voluntary, and students were anonymously portrayed in all research notes and writing. To ensure no harm came to participants or the School of Social Work, IRB approval was obtained at both UNC-Greensboro and UNC-Chapel Hill, and appropriate individuals at the School of Social Work were informed and consulted at all stages of the research project.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This qualitative instrumental case study examined the mental constructs (i.e., the effects of prior learning experiences that yield anticipations for the advising process) that master's level social work students bring to the academic advising process, and how these constructs impact their construction (i.e., understanding and interpretation) of the advising experience. The primary question guiding this research was, "How do the mental constructs brought to academic advising by master of social work students shape their construction of the advising experience?" The following supporting research questions also directed the study:

- What prior experiences with and knowledge of academic advising do MSW students bring to the advising process?
- What are MSW student expectations for the role of the advisor in the advising relationship?
- What are MSW student expectations for the role of the advisee in the advising relationship?
- What are MSW student expectations for early, middle, and later advising experiences as they progress through the program?
- What impact do MSW students expect their advising experience will have?

This chapter describes the advising preferences articulated by incoming full-time MSW students at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, the sample for this case study, and their advising experiences that relate to these preferences. Data germane to the research questions are presented in three sections. Findings are presented in the chronological order that data were collected: a first round of in-depth interviews, a survey, and a second round of in-depth interviews. Each section provides data analysis tables that summarize the findings, and presents detailed descriptions of the information provided by participants in each phase of the study. Results of the first interviews, second interviews, and open-ended MSW-AAI data are illustrated using Consensual Qualitative Research (Hill et al., 1997) data analysis tables organized by lines of inquiry. In addition, responses to the research questions addressed in this study are proposed. Pseudonyms have been assigned to participants in order to protect their identities. References for in-depth interview data are coded according to the type of data (FI = First Interview, SI = Second Interview).

First Interviews

Lines of inquiry for the first in-depth interviews included previous advising experiences, anticipated MSW advising needs, MSW advising preferences, and the role and impact of MSW advising. Tables illustrating the results of the Consensual Qualitative Research data analysis for each line of inquiry accompany the review of findings. The four Consensual Qualitative Research frequency categories are outlined in Table 4.1. Quotations from participants are intentionally woven throughout the review of findings to

provide participant voice to illustrate and ground the findings. Pseudonyms have been assigned to the quotations to protect the identities of participants.

Table 4.1

Consensual Qualitative Research Frequency Categories

Frequency	Definition	Number of Participants
General	Occurs in 90% or more participants	16-17
Typical	Occurs in 50%-90% of participants	9-15
Variant	Occurs in 20%-50% of participants	4-8
Rare	Occurs in less than 20% of participants	0-3

Previous Advising Experiences

The first line of inquiry in the first in-depth interviews revolved around the participants' past advising experiences. Questions addressed undergraduate advising structure, positive past advising experiences, and disappointing past advising experiences.

Table 4.2 summarizes these results.

Undergraduate advising structure. Participants were first asked about the structure of their undergraduate advising experience, and responses varied greatly. The most common undergraduate advising structure was categorized as variant in frequency (i.e., applying to more than 20% but less than 50% of participants), and was described as assignment to a faculty advisor as a first year student, and, after declaring a major, assignment to a new faculty advisor within that discipline. Also of variant frequency, several participants reported an advising structure in which they were assigned faculty

Table 4.2

First In-Depth Interview: Previous Advising Experiences

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Undergraduate Advising Structure	Faculty advisor as a first year student, faculty advisor once in a major	Variant	
	Same faculty advisor for all four years	Variant	
	Professional advisor as a first year student, faculty advisor once in a major	Rare	
	Different faculty advisor each academic year	Rare	
	Same professional advisor for all four years	Rare	
Positive Previous Advising Experiences	Decisions regarding major and curriculum choices	Typical	"[My advisor was] helpful when I needed to know about general college requirements" (Kim).
	Helped apply for job or to graduate school	Variant	"[My advisor] wrote me a number of recommendations and discussed graduate school decisions with me" (Sharon).
	Comfortable sharing concerns with advisor	Variant	"I felt comfortable talking to my advisor" (Mia).
	Assistance with course assignments	Rare	"My advisor helped me with a research project" (Amanda).
	One of many, advising not customized	Variant	"I felt like a number rather than a name" (Karen).
	Insufficient knowledge of the curriculum	Variant	"My advisor didn't seem to know or understand the curriculum requirements" (Amy).
Disappointing Previous Advising Experiences	Unavailable advisor	Variant	"My advisor wasn't accessible as much as I would have liked" (Sharon).
	Can't remember	Rare	"I can't remember" (Nicole).

Note: General = 16-17 cases; typical = 9 to 15 cases; variant = 4 to 8 cases; rare = 0 to 3 cases.

advisors as first year students and maintained those advisors throughout undergraduate education. Three advising structures that occurred with rare frequency included (a) assignment to a professional advisor as a first year student, followed by assignment to a faculty advisor once the student declared a major; (b) assignment to a different faculty advisor each academic year; and (c) assignment to a professional advisor for all four years.

Positive previous advising experiences. After clarifying their undergraduate advising structure, participants were asked to discuss their previous advising experiences. Participants were asked to identify one or more positive or helpful previous advising experiences and one or more disappointing or not helpful previous advising experiences. In terms of positive previous advising experiences, the most frequent responses were related to advisors' assistance with decisions regarding curriculum choices related to choosing a major and course selection. Typical participant comments included the following. Note that the names attached to the comments are pseudonyms. Julie shared an advising experience that was helpful to her as she chose a major.

I was thinking about going into journalism and we talked about journalism classes I had already taken and what I was really interested in. One day we had a long talk about what I really loved and we realized that journalism was probably not the right direction for me based on that. That discussion was really helpful for me; it took me in a completely different direction. (FI)

Kim stated that her advisor helped her most, "Whenever I needed to know about classes that fulfilled a certain perspective or general college requirement" (FI). The second category of responses was variant and included assistance with advice and

applications related to graduate school or jobs. Karen noted, “My advisor wrote a number of recommendations for me and discussed graduate school decisions with me” (FI).

Another variant helpful advising experience was feeling comfortable approaching advisors with questions and concerns. “I felt comfortable talking to my advisor and bouncing ideas off her,” revealed Rebecca (FI). The last category of helpful advising experiences occurred rarely. Only one participant noted that her most positive advising experience was receiving help with a major course assignment, perhaps signaling that this is not a typical role of undergraduate advisors.

Disappointing previous advising experiences. When asked about most disappointing or least helpful previous advising experiences, participant responses were evenly distributed between three categories: feeling anonymous, encountering advisors with insufficient knowledge of the curriculum, and unavailable advisors. A variant level response reported by participants was feeling “like a number rather than a person” (Amanda, FI). Karen noted, “I felt like my advisor had a million students and had done this a million times, like I was just a number. I remember thinking, ‘Do you even know my name?’ That was very frustrating” (FI). In addition, when discussing these feelings of anonymity, several participants also described a sense of being a burden to their advisors. For them, the advising experience was impersonal and they did not feel welcomed by their advisors. Furthermore, several participants were disappointed with their undergraduate advisor’s lack of knowledge about the curriculum. “During my freshman year, my advisor didn’t seem to know any more than I did, and pulled out the course catalog for information to guide me,” lamented Sharon (FI). Availability of advisors was

another variant theme when discussing disappointing advising experiences. The following comments are representative of the frequent student observations regarding the difficulty of accessing advisors: “Sometimes I had to wait up to four weeks for an appointment” (Kim, FI), and “Advisors weren’t as accessible as I would have liked” (Amy, FI). In two rare instances, participants could not remember any disappointing advising experiences.

Anticipated MSW Advising Needs

After describing their undergraduate advising experience, participants were asked about their anticipated advising needs as MSW graduate students. Two questions were posed to participants: “What are your anticipated advising needs?” and “How do you think your advising needs might change as you progress through the program?” A summary of the responses to these questions is presented in Table 4.3.

Advising Needs. The anticipated advising needs voiced by participants fell into three principal categories: shaping curriculum choices according to career goals, discussing career focus and career goals, and developing comfortable relationships with advisors. Each of these categories occurred with typical frequency (appearing in 9 to 15 participants’ responses). The response occurring most often, in 15 out of 17 participants’ responses, was the notion that advising assistance was needed to help obtain learning experiences while in the MSW program that are consistent with career plans for the future. Responses that illustrate this category included the following: “I will be seeking a lot of help in terms of what classes to take, the best opportunities like summer positions, what will most closely parallel my career goals, and whether...different options make

Table 4.3

First In-Depth Interview: Anticipated MSW Advising Needs

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Advising Needs	Shape curriculum choices according to career goals	Typical	"I will be seeking a lot of help in terms of ... whether or not different options make sense with my career goals" (Karen).
	Discuss social work career focus and preparation	Typical	"What are the best jobs initially to get you from point A to point B?" (Kristin).
	Develop comfortable relationship with advisor	Typical	"I hope we're able to build a relationship where I feel like I can come to [my advisor] whenever I need to or if I have any concerns" (Sharon).
Evolution of Advising Needs	Curriculum decisions evolving to career guidance	Typical	"Initially discussing curriculum options given my interest, then narrowing my field of study and talking about options for jobs in my second year" (Julie).
	Not sure how advising needs will evolve	Variant	"My needs will evolve as my questions change" (Julie) and "Don't know" (Jane).

Note: General = 16-17 cases; typical = 9 to 15 cases; variant = 4 to 8 cases; rare = 0 to 3 cases.

sense with my career goals” (Karen, FI); “[I need my advisor to] ensure my learning in and outside of the classroom is related to my career goals” (Jane, FI); “I need my advisor to help me assess my personal interests and goals with what the program has to offer and help me chart a course” (Adam, FI); and “I would love to have someone who has an in depth knowledge of field placements that are available and coincide with my career path and goals for the future” (Mia, FI). It is noteworthy that several students perceived learning experiences both in and outside the classroom to be in the advising domain.

Participants articulated a need to have advisors who were capable and willing to discuss career goals. Participants who had not yet narrowed their career focus needed help specifying their area of interest. Jane noted, “I’m not sure what I want to do with my MSW and would like to learn a lot more about the career options” (FI). Participants who had a career focus in mind needed guidance in terms of learning more about the landscape of social work, how their areas of interest fit within the profession, charting possible career paths, and suggestions for networking and establishing professional relationships. Kristin’s comments echoed those of many participants who shared that they would like to be able to get career advice from advisors:

What are the best summer internships? What are the best jobs initially to get you from point A to point B? I’m not asking my advisor to do the job search for me, obviously, but to explore what my career options are, the competitiveness, and the best ways to package your resume and your experiences. (FI)

Another participant who voiced a need for career guidance remarked,

I would hope that my advisor would help me see a number of opportunities that I might not have seen before. . .and maybe have some connections. I don’t know if

they would really hook you up with job interviews or anything like that, but maybe in the direction of how to look and where to search. (Rebecca, FI)

In addition, Adam expressed a need for his advisor to serve as a social work job counselor and said,

I hope my advisor will say, ‘This is how the social work system works in general, and here is where you are right now and as a result of this program. Here are some options that really fit for what and who you are and what your goals are. Let's talk about what the pros and cons are for each of those, and point you at one so when you leave here you are fully qualified to do something that is relevant for you.’ That’s kind of what I'm looking for, sort of like job counseling. That's sort of what's needed in a two-year graduate program like this when people are going to have to apply for a job in two years. (FI)

After reviewing the transcript of Adam’s interview, I noted in my research journal that his comments, and those of other participants, left me with the impression that the students were equating the MSW program with professional training. Thus, the students reported expectations of receiving career advice from an advisor as much or more than they expected or needed an advisor’s guidance related to the MSW academic program.

The final category of advising need, being comfortable developing a relationship with the advisor, was conveyed by Julie when she stated, “I hope my MSW advising experience will be more of a relationship than a checklist” (FI). Other participants elaborated on the kind of relationship they would like to build with their advisors. Sharon hoped “I am able to build a relationship where I feel like I can come to my advisor whenever I need to or if I have any doubts or concerns” (FI). This notion of accessibility on a broad scope of concerns was echoed by Amanda who noted “I’m hoping my advisor is someone I can come to, someone who is accessible, and someone who challenges me

and supports me” (FI). Rebecca knows she will have a solid relationship with her advisor when she can “bounce all sorts of ideas off my advisor, about something that comes up in class or about challenges in the program or other things that are on my mind” (FI).

Participants noted signs such as body language, recall of previous advising meetings, and time available for advisees would all impact their level of comfort (Marie, FI; Julie, FI; Linda, FI).

Evolution of advising needs. Although participants were able to clearly articulate their perceived advising needs, they were not as certain about how their advising needs might evolve. Only two categories of responses emerged from this line of inquiry. The first category appeared in more than half of participants’ responses, and comprised the idea that initial advising needs would be related to the curriculum, and later advising needs would be related to social work careers and jobs. Gwen predicted, “Now I’m focused on the achieving my academic goals, and in my second year I will be more guided toward the career and job focus more than the academic focus” (FI). Similarly, Kristin anticipated her advising needs will evolve: [I will have] more academic questions in the beginning, then as I progress through the program I would have more questions related to my concentration and field placement, and then [I would have] questions about my job after graduation” (FI).

The second category was a variant level response, occurring in almost half of the responses. Several participants were not sure how their advising needs might evolve as they progressed through the program. One participant simply stated, “I’m not sure about the evolution of my advising needs” (Linda, FI). Kristin remarked, “I’m not sure if my

advising needs would be lesser or greater as they evolve” (FI). Julie noted, “My needs will evolve as my questions change” (Julie, FI), but she was not yet sure of her advising questions or in what specific way her advising needs might change.

MSW Advising Preferences

Following the discussion of advising experiences and anticipated advising needs, participants were asked about their MSW advising preferences. These questions pursued several lines of inquiry, including preferences for their MSW advisors, expectations of their role as advisees, and the elements most important to them in their MSW advising experiences. Participant responses to these lines of questions are illustrated in Table 4.4.

Advisor preferences. As demonstrated in the table of MSW advising preferences (Table 4.4), categories and subcategories of advisor characteristics emerged in the discussion of advisor preferences. MSW advisor preferences fell into three principal categories: a preference for knowledge, a preference for a relationship with the advisor, and a preference for an advising strategy. Of those three categories, both knowledge and relationship preferences were general, surfacing in all 17 participant responses. Advising strategy preferences occurred at the typical level, appearing in more than half of participant responses. Thus, the question evolved to what types or areas of knowledge, relationships, and advising strategies participants most preferred. Probing questions and data analysis uncovered subcategories for each of the three categories.

Advisor knowledge. The interviews revealed preferences for four types of advisor knowledge. Knowledge of the field of social work, knowledge of the curriculum, and

Table 4.4

First In-Depth Interview: MSW Advising Preferences

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Advisor Preferences	Knowledge	General	
	Knowledge of the field of social work	Typical	"Knowledge of the field their advisees are all about" (Kristin).
	Knowledge of the curriculum	Typical	"Knowing the sort of classes [advisees] need to be taking, and the kind of field placement they need to get into the fields that they want" (Karen).
	Knowledge of career resources	Typical	"Have some local contacts, or at least some knowledge of what agencies are in the area" (Gwen).
	Knowledge of campus resources	Variant	"Even if they don't know answers [advisors] should have campus contacts to refer students to" (Kim).
	Relationship	General	
	Invests in advising relationship	Typical	"I prefer an advisor who wants to advise students" (Kristin).
	Establishes comfortable environment	Typical	"Approachability ... having [an advisor] act glad to see you and not burdened by your presence" (Amanda).
	Available	Typical	"Advisors should make sure their availability is clear from the outset and be available at those times" (Karen).
	Proposes alternatives	Variant	"Show me the positives and negatives in the choices" (Linda).
	Caring	Variant	"Coming across as caring and compassionate will help the advising relationship" (Jane).
	Supportive	Variant	"Be supportive of the decisions I make and not take decisions personally if they don't match my advisor's interests" (Karen).
	Role model	Rare	"As social workers, I think that advisors should illustrate everything that we volunteer ourselves to be as social workers" (Kristin).

Table 4.4 Continued

First In-Depth Interview: MSW Advising Preferences

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
	Advising Strategy/Skills	Typical	
	Reviews advisee records before meetings	Variant	"Keep notes so it's not like we're starting at the beginning every time we meet" (Julie).
	Discusses advising expectations with advisees	Variant	"Ask advisees what they hope to get out of the advising experience" (Nicole).
	Communicates well	Variant	"Good communicator" (Kristin) and "Good listener" (Rebecca).
Advisee Preferences	Take responsibility for advising relationship	Typical	"Have an attitude of seeking advising" (Mia).
	Research questions prior to advisor meetings	Typical	"Do some research on my own before the meeting" (Kim).
	Consider advisor suggestions	Typical	"Be open to new experiences and possibilities" (Dana).
	Communicate openly with advisor	Variant	"Share and be open and willing to express thoughts" (Rebecca).
Most important advising elements	Knowledgeable (field of social work, curriculum)	Typical	"[Advisor is] knowledgeable about the field of social work and the program" (Amy).
	Career guidance/matching curriculum with career goals	Typical	"My advising experience helps me get the career that I want after graduation" (Mia).
	Investment/interested	Typical	"[Advisor is] invested in the advising outcome" (Adam).
	Establishes comfortable environment	Typical	"[Advisor is] open and approachable" (Sharon).
	Availability	Typical	"Advisor is available" (Vanessa).
	Advising Strategy	Variant	"[Advisor has a] plan for the advising process" (Adam).

Note: General = 16-17 cases; typical = 9 to 15 cases; variant = 4 to 8 cases; rare = 0 to 3 cases.

knowledge of career resources were all responses that occurred at the typical level of frequency. Knowledge of campus resources was a variant level response.

As participants described their preferences, knowledge of the field of social work was mentioned more often than any other type of knowledge. Participants expected their advisors to have sufficient knowledge and experience of the field to be able to introduce students to the social work profession. Sharon noted, “I don’t doubt that my advisor will be extensively knowledgeable about the whole field of social work” (FI). Similarly, Rebecca anticipated, “My advisor can help me understand the field of social work and help me see different ways people use their degree” (FI). Nicole hoped her advisor would “understand the different fields MSW students could go into after graduation” (FI). Adam gave a detailed explanation of the knowledge of the field of social work he expected from his advisor:

I’m not really sure what terms and contexts and hierarchies there are [in the field of social work] and where would I fit in the way the typical social work PhD views social work and all its realms. I’d like my advisor to show me ‘You are here, this is where you are and on this big map of what social work is and what it’s about and how everything fits together.’ You know, different community programs and government programs and all these different facets and how they work to serve these needs. (FI)

When describing the curriculum knowledge they expected advisors would have, participants tended to understand knowledge of the curriculum within the context of their career focus and post-MSW plans. Julie said that her advisor should be “knowledgeable about the concentrations and able to suggest classes that are in line with what I want to

do” (FI). Another participant noted expectations for advising to encompass “the big picture”:

My expectation is that my advisor would expand beyond just what requirements there are for graduation and completion of the master’s degree, and talk about how I can get the most out of my education at Chapel Hill. I’d really like it if my advisor could tell me which courses might help me in the macro field of social work. (Marie, FI)

I made a note in my research journal that although knowledge of the curriculum is important to participants, it is intertwined with planning for a future career in social work and is not adequate as a sole offering of advising. Karen provided the most detailed response when she articulated this advising preference:

Advisors should know the jobs students are looking for and be familiar with what MSW students need to do for those two years, the sort of classes they need to be taking, and the kinds of field placements they need to be in to get into the fields that they want, and the different types of licensures they need to get for whichever field or job they go into after they get their MSW. (FI)

Related to knowledge of the field of social work and knowledge of the curriculum as it relates to career goals, the third category of preferred type of advisor knowledge was having an understanding of career resources. Participants named specific career resources they would find useful such as networking and knowledge of the MSW job market. Jane hoped her advisor would have knowledge of local agencies and be able to provide “networking help” (FI). Similarly, Mia thought:

It would help [for my advisor] to have some local contacts, or at least some knowledge of what agencies are in the area, and to know if you’re interested in substance abuse, where you could talk to someone who works in that area. (FI)

Vanessa noted “A list of available employers in this area or in NC would be helpful” (FI). She went on to point out “The advisor would best know your interests and which employers are looking for [your interests]. It would be helpful if the advisor had knowledge of the job market for social workers” (FI). Interestingly, my research journal notes reflect that the three most frequently preferred categories of advisor knowledge revolve around planning for a student’s next steps in social work.

The fourth type of preferred advisor knowledge, knowledge of campus resources, was mentioned with variant frequency. Participants who voiced this advising preference were more concerned that their advisors be knowledgeable enough about campus resources to be able to provide appropriate referrals when necessary. Kim noted, “Even if advisors don’t know answers themselves, they should have campus contacts to refer students to” (FI). In addition, Sharon commented, “I need an advisor who has connections to resources in the school to help me with questions I might have that they don’t know how to answer regardless of if they know the answer or not” (FI).

Positive relationship with advisor. Another principal category of advisor preferences was a desire for a strong, positive relationship with the advisor. In terms of the type of relationship participants sought, responses indicated several subcategories, including investment in the advising relationship (typical frequency), establishment of a comfortable environment (typical frequency), availability (typical frequency), proposing alternatives (variant frequency), caring nature (variant frequency), supportiveness (variant frequency), and serving as a role model (rare frequency).

The first main theme that emerged in discussions about advisor preferences was the advisor's investment in the advising relationship, with more than half of the participants clearly noting this characteristic was important to them. The following participant comments illustrate this theme:

I prefer an advisor who wants to advise students, someone who has time for advising, embraces it, and wants to meet on a regular basis. (Kristin, FI)

Investment on [the advisor's] part is important to me, so I'm just not another name and face walking through. Just being encouraging and genuinely interested in my success as much as possible [is important to me]. (Jane, FI)

From my conversations with my advisors in the past, I feel like sometimes I was just wasting their time. I want to feel that academic advising is a priority and not just an added task the school threw on. I think it all comes across from the attitude during the meetings. If your advisor is trying to rush you through the conversation or not really paying attention to it or just trying to get to the bottom line right away and doesn't want to spend the time discussing any questions, then you know they're not interested. (Amy, FI)

You want your advisor to be genuinely interested in helping you and not just a burdensome part of their job. You want to know they really did want you to come to them and made themselves available and that when you went you could tell they were genuinely interested in what you're trying to do. (Mia, FI)

All too often I come across professors who have been worked 20 or 30 years and are sort of cynical and just want to put in their time and go home, and when you ask a question they kind of mumble or read a book or you just get this offhanded brush-off or just go away kind of feeling. The world has these people and there are some in every department of any organization. That's fine, but if a whole program is full of these people it is going to be a miserable experience and you are going to wind of feeling like you're just a cow waiting for slaughter, you are just part of the product going through the grinder and you don't ever get the sense that you are viewed as a valuable resource or anything. I guess I'm a little hypersensitive at the contrast because it's a stark one when you come across an advisor who enjoys what they do - it's a stark contrast from someone who just wants to put in their time and not really have anything to do with you. (Adam, FI)

When participants expressed an interest in advisors establishing a comfortable environment, they were asked to elaborate by describing what would make them feel comfortable. Amanda explained, “Approachability is important to me. I think you can tell just by the vibes someone emits when you walk into a room, having them act glad to see you and not burdened by your presence” (FI). Rebecca clarified her response by adding that a “friendly and warm” advisor would help her feel comfortable, and that “nonverbal cues” would play an important role in setting the tone for advising (FI). Trust was another factor students mentioned when describing the characteristics comprising a comfortable advising environment. As Linda expressed, “I hope I don’t have to call them Mr. or Mrs., and that I don’t get nervous going to see them because they are going to judge me. Being able to speak my mind in front of them rather than having to hold back my opinion and having trust in them would be ideal” (FI). Elaborating on how she would feel comfortable with her advisor, Julie said “Gaining trust and rapport with my advisor would be important, knowing that it’s not just my advisor that knows me but that I also know my advisor, and being comfortable having conversations about other things than just my classes. Body language is always a part of trust and listening for me, such as eye contact and whether they are doing other things” (FI).

Availability was another typical level preference among participants. An “adequate” student to advisor ratio was important to Amanda, and Marie reasoned, “The advisor’s advising load shouldn’t be so high that they’re overwhelmed and students don’t feel like they can get the help they need” (FI). Clarity and follow-through regarding an advisor’s availability were essential for several participants who said, “I’d like to know

outright from the beginning when and where my advisor is available,” (Amy, FI) and “Advisors should make sure their availability is clear from the outset and be available at those times” (Karen, FI).

Other preferred advisor characteristics that occurred at the variant level of responses included proposing alternatives and the consequences of those alternatives, having a caring nature, and being supportive. Participants anticipated advisors would help them identify alternatives and consequences to their choices but allow the advisees to make the final decisions. Linda stated, “I hope my future advisor can show me the positives and negatives in choices and will put their opinion out there but know I don’t need to actually choose that opinion” (FI). Mia wanted an advisor who was “. . . able to point out a variety of things that might be right for you that you might not know about” (FI). Concise and to the point, Kristin stated, “I want someone to brainstorm with me” (FI).

Several participants associated a caring advisor with the ability to have compassion for students and empathize with their students. Jane expressed her belief that “coming across as caring and compassionate would help the advising relationship” (FI). Similarly, Sharon said she felt that “Advisors need to be compassionate; able to empathize with students, and remember when they were graduate students” (FI). Participants who mentioned a supportive advisor as a preference for the advising relationship associated this characteristic with supporting the decisions of their advisees. Kristin hoped her advisor would share opinions but “be supportive even if I don’t choose that [the advisor’s] opinion” (FI). Likewise, Karen hoped her advisor would “be

supportive of the decisions I make and not take my decisions personally if they don't match my advisor's interests" (FI).

Preferring advisors who served as role models was a rare level response and mentioned by only two participants. Kristin shared, "As social workers, I think that advisors should illustrate everything that we volunteer ourselves to be as social workers" (FI). Sharon also acknowledged that she would like her advisor to embrace being a role model for advisees (FI). In my research journal, I noted surprise that more participants had not mentioned the notion of advisors as role models. I had expected the advisor as role model to be a primary theme for advisor preferences.

Advising strategy and skills. The third principal category of participant preferences was advisor strategies and skills. More than half of participants mentioned a particular advising strategy or advisor skill as a valued characteristic in the advising relationship. However, no specific advising strategy or skill was dominant. Three subcategories of advising strategies and advisor skills were identified from the analysis of participant comments: (a) advisor reviews advisee's records before advising meetings; (b) advisor discusses advising expectations with advisees; and (c) advisor communicates well. Each subcategory occurred at the variant level of frequency.

Participants who expressed a preference for advisors to keep records and review them before advising meetings were concerned that advisors remember previous meetings to facilitate progression in the advising relationship. Dana explained that if she were an advisor, "I would basically have a file with each advisee's resume and things they have told me, to try and remember each advisee and what stage each one is in" (FI).

Along the same lines, Julie hoped her advisor would “keep notes so it’s not like we’re starting at the beginning every time we meet” (FI). Adam articulated greater detail of his expectation for advisors’ recordkeeping: his comments are included to illustrate the high level of expectations some participants hold for advisors:

[As an advisor], I would have a simple manila folder with information about the student, I would have their undergraduate experience, I would have their application, I would have all the information essentially that the school has in there and I would spend let’s say an hour per student before I ever see the student going through all this information and coming up with some main highlight points of concerns that they have, positive ideas and constructive advice that I have and just get a starting point and get that familiarity with that person’s background so when they come through the door I already have a sense of where I’m going or what’s going to happen. I’ve sat down with professors who engage in an advising experience and you can tell they didn’t do anything, you could tell my being there was the first exposure they had to me so starting from scratch and only having 15 minutes you just feel like you are never going to get a good answer for anything. (FI)

The notion that advisors should discuss expectations for the advising experience with advisees was another theme among the participant remarks that occurred at the variant level. Nicole stated, “It would be helpful for the advisor to ask advisees what they hope to get out of the advising experience” (FI). Kristin echoed a preference for this advising strategy and noted, “[As an advisor], I would do some kind of a syllabus of what [my advisees] can expect from me and what my expectations are of people that I advise” (FI). Similarly, Dana thought that advisors should “initially have a discussion about what the advisee would ideally like out of the advising relationship. The student should direct a lot of what they want out the relationship because everyone won’t necessarily have the same expectations” (FI).

Communicating well was a necessary skill for successful advising identified by several participants. These participants preferred an advisor who was a “good listener,” (Rebecca, FI) and a “good communicator” (Kristin, FI). Marie described an active advisor as one who “can hone in on your concerns” and “help you get a focus on the issue at hand” (FI). She noted that advisors need to be strike a good balance when communicating with advisees and said, “It’s important that your advisor lets you talk, rather than just talking at you but also is not completely silent” (FI).

Advisee preferences. The line of inquiry concerned with advisee preferences for the advising relationship yielded four main categories: (a) participants expect to take responsibility for the advising relationship; (b) students expect to research their questions prior to meetings with advisors; (c) students expect to consider suggestions from advisors; and (d) students expect to communicate openly with advisors. The first three categories occurred in participant responses at the typical level of frequency; the fourth category was variant in frequency.

In my research journal, I noted that in their accounts of undergraduate advising experiences, participants seemed to expect their advisors to take responsibility for the advising relationship. As they near the beginning of their MSW advising experiences, participants displayed a willingness to take responsibility for their MSW advising experience. Mia asserted that as an advisee, she “needed to have an attitude of seeking advising” (FI). Another participant reasoned, “I have to take responsibility for the advising relationship” (Nicole, FI). Elaborating on this notion of student responsibility for the advising relationship, Kim said,

Coming to meet consistently enough to have a chance to develop that advising relationship is important. If I only come once in the beginning [to see my advisor], and then look back and say ‘She was not a very good advisor,’ then I haven’t done my part. I need to make myself available. (FI)

Similarly, participants recognized the need to research advising questions as much as possible prior to meeting with advisors. Two responses summarized the comments of many participants who articulated this expectation for advisees. Kim stated,

Rather than just asking any question that comes to mind, I need to do some research on my own before the meeting because I don’t think an advisor is there to hold your hand through every baby step of the program. (FI)

Amanda expressed her self-expectations as an advisee by saying, “[I expect I will] come prepared for meetings with my advisor, not just hoping [he or she] will have answers to all of my questions and not depending on the advisor to solve everything” (FI).

In addition, as illustrated by the comments of two participants, the importance of considering advisor suggestions was acknowledged:

I will be open to feedback from my advisor and constructive criticism if that applies. I’m at the stage where I would want someone to tell me if I’m being realistic in terms of what I want to do. The advisor might be able to point out some other options I might not have considered. (Kristin, FI)

Advisees should be open to the suggestions of their advisors. Since they are professors and have the experience, advisees definitely should be willing to listen to what they have to say and see how it would apply to their situations ... [advisees] should be open and go in to advisor meetings without anything really set in stone. They should be willing to hear ideas and suggestions about which choices would fit their needs the best. (Linda, FI)

Furthermore, to receive the most helpful feedback from advisors, several participants noted that they must be willing to communicate openly and honestly with advisors. Adam explained, “It’s my responsibility to provide a synthesis of myself and clearly define what I don’t know, what I want to know, and what I want out of the program” (FI). Thinking about the role of advisees in the advising relationship, Rebecca anticipated that she would be able to be open with her advisor and “willing to express thoughts that aren’t comfortable or things I’m wrestling with, and maybe be vulnerable in a sense” (FI). Linda reasoned, “If I need something or if I have a question I should ask and not expect the advisor to figure it out or magically know it” (FI).

Most important advising elements. At the close of each discussion about advising preferences, participants were asked to review all the elements of the advising experience they had mentioned in their discussion of advising preferences, and name the three elements that were most important to them. The advising elements identified by participants as most important were grouped into six categories. Five of these categories were typical level of frequency, appearing in more than half of participant responses. These categories included advisors knowledgeable about the field of social work and the curriculum, advisors who offer career guidance, advisors who are invested and interested, advisors who establish a comfortable environment for advising, and advisors who are available. One of the categories, advisors who have an advising strategy, had a variant level of frequency.

Role and Impact of MSW Advising

The last line of questioning in the first interviews addressed participants' perceptions of the difference between the roles of undergraduate advising and graduate advising, how participants developed this understanding of the roles of advising, and the anticipated impact participants foresaw based on the assumption their MSW advising experience would meet their expectations. A summary of responses related to these lines of inquiry is presented in Table 4.5.

Difference between roles of undergraduate and graduate advising. Participants shared remarkably similar perceptions of the differences between the roles of their undergraduate and graduate advising experiences. Sixteen of the 17 participants articulated the same distinction between undergraduate and MSW advising, making the category a general level of frequency. Participants understood the primary role of undergraduate advising as helping them obtain their undergraduate degree, while they perceived the primary role of MSW advising as preparing them for their "next steps" after graduation. As undergraduates, participants sensed they were less directed and less mature than they were as incoming MSW students, and their undergraduate advising emphasis was on meeting curriculum requirements. As incoming MSW students, participants expressed feeling more directed, more mature, and their emphasis was on narrowing their area of interest within the field of social work and seeking career guidance. As I conducted the first in-depth interviews and began to observe this trend in perceived difference between undergraduate and graduate advising, I wrote in my research journal: "This is a major finding! Incoming MSW students are getting ready to

Table 4.5

First In-Depth Interview: Role and Impact of MSW Advising

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Difference Between Undergraduate and Graduate Advising	Undergraduate Advising - emphasis on meeting curriculum requirements	General	"You're thinking about your major and finishing college, but not about job-related issues. Your questions are more related to your classes" (Jane). "You're older and have more job experience, so you want specific advice about what you'd be doing in a certain job and what classes to take to get the kind of job you want. Graduate advising should be career-focused" (Jane).
	Graduate Advising - emphasis on career focus and guidance	General	
How Advising Role was Learned	Undergraduate advising experiences	Typical	"What worked and didn't work for me in my undergraduate advising experience" (Gwen).
	Other students	Variant	"Talking to friends who formed deeper relationships with their advisors than I did" (Dana).
	Work experience	Rare	"I received the best advising from people who cared about me and were supportive of me at my current job" (Karen).
	Personal beliefs	Rare	"Discussions about discipleship, someone leading the way" (Rebecca).
	Values of social work profession	Rare	"People in social work tend to be good listeners" (Marie).
Anticipated Impact of MSW Advising	Confidence in preparation for "next steps"	Typical	"[I'll be] more confident and secure in my career choice and how prepared I am for it" (Kristin).
	Desire to maintain a relationship with advisor after graduation	Variant	"Once I leave or graduate I [will] still talk with that advisor and seek input" (Vanessa).
	Advisor was invested in the advising relationship	Variant	"My advisor [will be] invested in the outcome and care what it is" (Adam).

Note: General = 16-17 cases; typical = 9 to 15 cases; variant = 4 to 8 cases; rare = 0 to 3 cases.

enter a professional program, and their advising needs are focused on the profession they are readying themselves to enter.” Although lengthy, the following quotations from participant responses to this question effectively illustrated the considerable similarities and parallels in participant responses:

As an undergraduate, you're thinking about your major and finishing college, but not about job-related issues. Your questions are more related to your classes. As a graduate student, you're older and have more job experience, so you want specific advice about what you'd be doing in a certain job and what classes to take to get the kind of job you want. Graduate advising should be more career-focused. (Jane, FI)

I think more professional counseling is needed as a graduate student. Everything should be geared towards your professional goals rather than academics which would be more needed during undergrad. Generally, your advisor is a social worker in this program and, during undergrad, the advisor is not necessarily in the same field you are in. (Vanessa, FI)

For the graduate experience, I am going to need a more directed kind of advising because it is going to be more career focused and hopefully more of a full experience to help me see all the perspectives and possibilities but at the same time help me to focus. (Dana, FI)

You are much more focused on an angle in grad school than you are in undergrad. I think one of the benefits of undergrad is that you're exploring new things. You can take a lot of different courses to see what would work for you. And then graduate school, I mean, I feel that getting a master's in social work is a step to a career in nonprofit management. So I have this clear and defined step in mind, and it's like well, this is where I want to be, how do I get there, rather than I don't know where I want to be. (Amy, FI)

In undergrad I was sort of this lost sheep. I think it is more me that has changed than my advisors themselves. I want to have a professional relationship with my advisor and be taken really seriously in my career. I want to be considered not only a student but an adult and a professional that has been in the workplace for a few years. (Amanda, FI)

I think maybe in graduate school I have this expectation there is more. In undergrad I didn't really know what I wanted to do when I graduated and I didn't really expect my professor or advisor to necessarily help me find a job that met

my interests. Because this is a professional program I anticipate really using my master's of social work or doing something with that degree. I feel like there is some component of finding a job afterwards or helping you really think about your career or more long-term goals for yourself. In undergrad I felt like the goal was to get a degree and get a good education and wasn't necessarily to gain these skills that I was going to use in a career. Whereas now I'm hoping to gain skills and an education but skills I can use in my career. (Rebecca, FI)

How advising role was learned. To develop an initial understanding of the mental constructs incoming students bring to the MSW advising process, and how these constructs are shaped by their advising experience, participants were asked to describe how they arrived at their understanding of the role of advising. Only one response to this question appeared with typical frequency: the notion that past advising experiences, especially undergraduate advising, influenced this understanding. The idea that the role of advising was learned from other students was mentioned with variant frequency. Other response categories occurred at the rare level.

Regarding learning about the role of advising from past advising experiences, Amanda reflected, "I've learned what's important and what I hope will be there in [the MSW advising] relationship through what I lacked in my first go around with an advisor" (FI). Julie also noted,

During my undergraduate advising I thought about things that would have been helpful that I didn't necessarily experience, and knowing that I would have liked more direction in terms of having that [advising] relationship and someone knowing what I was interested in. (FI)

Similarly, Mia learned about the role of advising through comparing unhelpful and helpful experiences: "...my undergraduate experience of going to advisors who didn't

know me and didn't know me goals. It wasn't a very helpful experience. Then I had a good advising experience with a teaching assistant my final year that was helpful" (FI). Jane also learned about the role of advising as an undergraduate: "My advising expectations were set at my freshman orientation when they told me my advisor could help me choose my courses. In my mind, I knew the courses I wanted to take and didn't think I needed an advisor" (FI).

Several participants claimed to discover the role of advising from interactions with other students. Rebecca gained her understanding of advising from "friends who have gone to graduate school" and "looking at some of my undergraduate friends who developed meaningful relationships with their advisors" (FI). Similarly, Dana defined the advising role from "talking to friends who formed deeper relationships with their advisors than I did," and "came to see that the ideal advisor is someone who can offer perspectives that you might be interested in and who can give career advice based on their experiences" (FI).

Participants also attributed learning about the role of advising to work experience, personal beliefs, and values of the social work profession. These categories occurred with rare frequency; they were mentioned by only one or two participants. Through colleagues with a shared interest in social work, Linda learned that she would "like an advisor who has experience in the field I'm interested in, and can help you along the way" (FI). From her personal beliefs, Rebecca discerned the advising role to be comparable to:

A big sibling, or someone who is older and has more experience in life, who can help you as you are making decisions for the future. Also, I grew up in a

somewhat conservative church and they talked a lot about discipleship and someone leading the way. I think that some of my ideas came from that idea. (FI)

Marie's comments demonstrated her expectations that MSW advising would reflect the values of the social work profession: "Most people in social work tend to be good listeners, helpful, knowledgeable of resources, and 'people' people, well-rounded and open to different possibilities" (FI).

Anticipated impact of MSW advising. One of the last questions posed to participants in their first in-depth interviews explored the potential effect or impact that MSW advising might have, assuming their expectations were met. For several participants, this question required a bit of reflection. I noted in my research journal that participants often commented this was a good question and one they had not thought about before the interview. After briefly thinking about the question, participants were able to clearly verbalize the impact of an "ideal" advising relationship. The most common category of responses to this question occurred with typical frequency, and involved feeling confident in preparation for "next steps" after graduation. Two additional categories, each occurring with variant frequency, also emerged from the analysis of interviews: (a) a desire to maintain a relationship with the advisor after graduating from the MSW program, and (b) feeling like the advisor was invested in the advising relationship.

For more than half of the participants, the effect of an ideal MSW advising experience would be a sense of success and confidence in their career preparation. As Dana shared,

I would feel like I've come from a strong program and would feel like I've had the right kinds of experiences. [The ideal MSW advising experience] would give me the confidence to say I did the right types of things to have the kinds of experiences I wanted. (Dana, FI)

Kristin predicted the ideal MSW advising experience would “make me more confident and secure in my career choice, and how prepared I am for that” (FI). Similarly, Vanessa noted, “If I had my ideal advising experience, I would come out with all my goals met as a graduate student and have confidence entering the job market” (FI). For some participants, this feeling of confidence would be attained if their advisor helped them make decisions about the future consistent with their goals. Adam responded, “The main thing is not leaving the program feeling cheated but rather that I was in the right certificate or the right focus. I guess [the impact] would be a confidence that I've been prepared for the right thing” (FI). Mia had the most specific and extensive idea about how her ideal MSW advising experience would impact her:

I would hope that it [the ideal MSW advising experience] would help me get through the program successfully, and when I come out I know the exact career I want and am basically in this career and starting off. [she clarified “in her career”] I will be actually employed or will be employed soon after I get the degree. I will already have made a connection with the job or the company through the program. (Mia, FI).

Several participants associated having their MSW advising expectations met with a desire to maintain a relationship with their advisors after graduating from the MSW program. Vanessa envisioned, “I think [the MSW advising experience] will have the type of impact where once I leave or graduate I can still talk with my advisor and seek input”

(FI). With the ideal MSW advising experience, Sharon pictured herself staying in contact with her advisor long after she graduated and had children (FI).

For several other participants, the ideal advising relationship would yield the impression that the advisor was invested in the advising relationship and cared about its affect on the student and the outcome. Karen commented, “Ideally, I’ll know that my advisor cares that I makes something of my life” (FI). When she graduates, Amanda hopes her advisor will “feel satisfied that [she has] helped a student and developed a good relationship” (FI). Adam explained,

I want my advisor to feel good that [he or she] made an effort with me and it paid off. I want my advisor to be invested in the outcome and care what it is because that would demonstrate to me that I’ve gotten everything the advisor had to offer in the experience. (FI)

Summary of First Interviews

The first interviews revealed trends in previous advising experiences, anticipated MSW advising needs, MSW advising preferences, and the role and impact of MSW advising. Analysis of the data collected during the first interviews indicated a need for clarification and elaboration regarding several key findings and questions. These areas for further probing included career guidance as an advising priority, the most important elements of the advising experience as identified by students, the purpose of advising at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and specific instances where previous advising experiences had changed participants’ thoughts about advising. These issues were addressed in the protocol for the second in-depth interviews.

Survey Results of the MSW-AAI

To establish Yin's chain of evidence, this instrumental case study utilized multiple methods of data that included in-depth interviews as well as a survey instrument. Distributing the MSW-AAI, a modified version of the well-known AAI advising survey instrument, to all full-time fall 2006 incoming MSW students increased the trustworthiness of the study. Although a quantitative survey was employed, this study is nonetheless qualitative. The first and second in-depth interviews served as the primary data sources, and the MSW-AAI was a secondary data source used to supplement the findings from the first in-depth interviews, inform the second interview protocol, and help saturate the data source. See Appendix A to view the complete MSW-AAI.

Results gathered from the MSW-AAI revealed trends in incoming MSW students' preferences for the advising relationship. The data collected from the MSW-AAI is examined in this section and presented in four parts. First, findings from a *t*-test that compared the differences between interview and survey-only participants are displayed. Second, results of the calculated means procedures are presented. Next, overall developmental-prescriptive advising scores are examined. Last, findings related to the open-ended questions in Part III of the MSW-AAI are described. A summary of preliminary patterns based on the MSW-AAI, and how these patterns contributed to the protocol for the second interviews, is presented at the conclusion.

T-test Procedure

A *t*-test was performed on survey items in Part I and Part II to establish whether the two groups of survey participants - *interview participants* who completed both the

interviews and the survey, and *survey-only participants* who completed only the survey - were significantly different. The *t*-test procedure determined whether the data from both populations could be combined when analyzing MSW-AAI results. Results of the *t*-test procedure are given in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Pooled-Variance T-Test Results

Variable	Degrees of Freedom	<i>t</i> Value	Pr > <i>t</i>
I.1	56	2.48	0.0160*
I.2	56	0.32	0.7491
I.3	56	0.92	0.3613
I.4	56	1.04	0.3012
I.5	56	0.87	0.3883
I.6	56	-1.14	0.2607
I.7	56	0.87	0.3874
I.8	56	0.57	0.5697
I.9	56	-0.61	0.5451
I.10	56	0.68	0.4980
I.11	56	-1.22	0.2293
I.12	55	-1.07	0.2892
I.13	56	0.95	0.3473
I.14	56	0.91	0.3642
II.1	56	0.57	0.5679
II.2	56	2.1	0.0400*
II.3	56	-0.64	0.5231
II.4	55	0.98	0.3290
II.5	55	1.1	0.2766
II.6	55	1.56	0.1235
II.7	56	-0.7	0.4883
II.8	55	1.59	0.1182
II.9	56	2.49	0.0159*
II.10	56	1.41	0.1647
II.11	56	0.8	0.4256

* Indicates significant difference

The *t*-test indicated that the difference in means between the interview participants and the survey-only participants was not significant for 13 of the 14

questions in Part I and 9 of the 11 questions in Part II. The differences between the two groups could be considered significant on only three survey questions (Part I, question 1; Part II, questions 2 and 9). Possible explanations for these differences were explored in the second interviews. The *t*-test indicated that, overall, the advising preferences of the interview participants and the survey-only participants did not differ significantly, and that the responses of the interview participants on the MSW-AAI were not skewed by their participation in the interviews. Thus, data from both groups of participants could be safely combined for analysis.

Means Procedures

On the 8-point Likert scale used in Parts I and II of the MSW-AAI, a rating of one represented the most prescriptive advising preference, and a rating of 8 represented the most developmental advising preference. A prescriptive advising relationship is based on authority with the advisor as the expert (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). In prescriptive advising relationships, the advisor “diagnoses the student’s problems, prescribes remedies, and gives detailed instructions” (Winston & Sandor, 1984b, p.11). In developmental advising relationships, the advisor and the student have a comfortable and caring relationship, clearly negotiate and share responsibilities for various advising tasks, and together address the student’s total education and use of all available resources (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). The developmental-prescriptive scale is presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

MSW Academic Advising Inventory Likert Scale

Likert Scale Number	Representation
1	Prescriptive – Very Important
2	Prescriptive – Important
3	Prescriptive – Somewhat Important
4	Prescriptive – Slightly Important
5	Developmental – Slightly Important
6	Developmental – Somewhat Important
7	Developmental – Important
8	Developmental – Very Important

Means procedures were performed to ascertain trends in survey responses. Means were calculated separately for the interview participants as well as the survey-only participants, and for a combined group. Means between 0 and 4 represented a preference for prescriptive advising, and means between 5 and 8 indicated a preference for developmental advising. Results of the means procedures are provided in Table 4.8.

Overwhelmingly, the average means for combined survey participants indicated a preference for developmental advising, with each mean above five (*Developmental – Slightly Important*). In terms of the separate means procedures for the interview and survey-only groups, the mean for each question was above five, with the exception of one question. The mean response of survey-only participants to question one in Part I was

Table 4.8

MSW Academic Advising Inventory Means Procedure

Item Content	Item	N	Combined Means			Interview Means			Survey-Only Means		
			Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Academic Courses and Programs	I.1	58	5.07	2.65	1	8	17	6.35	2.32	2	8
Schedule	I.2	58	7.28	1.17	2	8	17	7.35	1.06	5	8
Career Opportunities	I.3	58	7.55	0.82	5	8	17	7.71	0.77	5	8
Outside of Class Activities	I.4	58	6.24	1.35	2	8	17	6.53	1.07	5	8
Academic Goals	I.5	58	7.10	0.74	5	8	17	7.24	0.75	6	8
Registration	I.6	58	6.69	1.20	2	8	17	6.41	1.00	5	8
Difficult Decisions	I.7	58	7.33	0.80	5	8	17	7.47	0.87	5	8
Nonacademic Problems	I.8	58	6.26	1.31	4	8	17	6.41	1.33	4	8
Study Techniques	I.9	58	5.62	1.67	2	8	17	5.41	1.58	2	8
Advising Expectations	I.10	58	6.43	1.55	1	8	17	6.65	1.87	1	8
Choosing a Major	I.11	58	6.84	1.04	4	8	17	6.59	1.12	5	8
Course Selection	I.12	57	7.14	0.90	5	8	16	6.94	1.06	5	8

Table 4.8 Continued

MSW Academic Advising Inventory Means Procedure

Combined Means			Interview Means				Survey-Only Means									
Item Content	Item	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Nonacademic Interests	I.13	58	6.12	1.20	2	8	17	6.35	1.06	5	8	41	6.02	1.25	2	8
	I.14	58	6.95	0.91	5	8	17	7.12	0.86	5	8	41	6.88	0.93	5	8
Academic Progress	I.14	58	6.95	0.91	5	8	17	7.12	0.86	5	8	41	6.88	0.93	5	8
Concentration Choice	II.1	58	6.69	1.64	1	8	17	6.88	1.62	3	8	41	6.61	1.66	1	8
Future Involvement in Social Work	II.2	58	7.33	1.05	2	8	17	7.76	0.56	6	8	41	7.15	1.15	2	8
Sharing Academic Interests	II.3	58	6.34	1.28	2	8	17	6.18	1.63	2	8	41	6.41	1.12	5	8
Curriculum	II.4	57	6.68	1.28	3	8	17	6.94	0.66	6	8	40	6.58	1.47	3	8
Social Work Values	II.5	57	6.12	1.30	3	8	17	6.41	1.18	5	8	40	6.00	1.34	3	8
Field Practicum	II.6	57	6.81	0.99	5	8	17	7.12	0.93	5	8	40	6.68	1.00	5	8
Ethical Dilemmas	II.7	58	6.66	1.29	3	8	17	6.47	1.23	5	8	41	6.73	1.32	3	8
Advisor Meetings	II.8	57	5.81	1.72	1	8	17	6.35	1.84	2	8	40	5.58	1.63	1	8
Registration Deadlines	II.9	58	5.59	2.18	1	8	17	6.65	1.17	4	8	41	5.15	2.36	1	8
Personal Concerns	II.10	58	6.24	1.22	4	8	17	6.59	1.28	4	8	41	6.10	1.18	4	8
Continuing Education	II.11	58	6.88	1.09	5	8	17	7.06	1.09	5	8	41	6.80	1.10	5	8

4.54, which indicated no clear preference for either prescriptive or developmental advising.

Reviewing the overall means for Parts I and II, the survey items in the highest developmental range, *Developmental – Very Important*, were Part I.2, Part I.3, Part I.5, Part I.7, Part I.12, and Part II.2. The survey item that had the highest developmental mean was Part I.3. This question focused on discussing career opportunities with advisors, indicating that participants had a strong preference for career guidance from their MSW advisors. Topics of the other survey items that received the highest scores on the developmental-prescriptive scale included (a) preferring an advisor who suggests important considerations in planning a schedule and then give the advisee the responsibility for the final decision; (b) preferring an advisor who assists the advisee in identifying realistic academic goals based on what he or she knows about the advisee as well as about their test scores and grades; (c) preferring an advisor who discusses alternatives for difficult decisions with the advisee and then lets the advisee decide on the best course of action; (d) preferring an advisor who uses information such as test scores, grades, interests, and abilities to determine what courses are most appropriate for the advisee to take; and (e) preferring an advisor who shares knowledge about social work licensure and the National Association of Social Workers as well as the advisee's future involvement in the profession of social work.

Several survey items yielded no prescriptive responses from any of the survey participants. These items include several of the questions mentioned above (Part I.3, Part I.5, Part I.7, Part I.12) as well as several additional questions (Part I.14, Part II.6, and Part

II.11). Part I.14 related to academic progress, Part II.6 related to related to the integration of the social work field practicum and course work, and Part II.11 related to discussing options for continuing education and lifelong learning with the advisor.

Of the combined means, the survey items with the scores closest to prescriptive, in the *Developmental – Slightly Important*, range were Part I.1, Part I.9, Part II.8, and Part: II.9. The survey item with the highest prescriptive mean was Part I.1, which addressed academic courses and programs. Survey participants indicated a slight preference toward the developmental side of this question, preferring an advisor who is interested in helping the advisee learn how to find out course and program information for him or herself, rather than an advisor who tells the advisee what the advisor perceives the student needs to know about academic courses and programs. Topics of other survey items that received the lowest developmental scores included (a) preferring an advisor who gives the advisees tips on managing their time better and studying more effectively when they seem to need them; (b) preferring that the advisee take responsibility for schedule meetings with the advisor; and (c) preferring an advisor who teaches advisees how to access information about registration deadlines rather than having an advisor who tells advisees when these registration deadlines are approaching.

Developmental-Prescriptive Advising Scores

The creators of the AAI, Winston and Sandor (1984b), developed a scoring technique to find an overall Developmental-Prescriptive Advising score. In addition, they established scoring techniques to find developmental-prescriptive advising scores for the three categories of advising preferences: Personalizing Education, Academic Decision

Making, and Selecting Courses. For each category, scores on the developmental advising range equate to strength of preference for developmental advising, with higher scores indicating stronger preferences (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). Sums of the items that belong to each category were calculated, and a mean sum score as well as an average mean score were obtained. The results of sum calculations for the MSW-AAI are reported in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

<i>Overall Developmental-Prescriptive Advising (DPA) Scores</i>						
	Items	Total Range	Prescriptive Advising Range	Developmental Advising Range	Sum Score	Mean Score
DPA Part I	Part I (1-14)	14 to 112	14 to 56	57 to 112	93	6.62
DPA Part II	Part II (1-11)	11 to 88	11 to 44	45 to 88	71	6.47
Personalizing Education	Part I (1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13)	8 to 64	8 to 32	33 to 64	50	6.3
Academic Decision Making	Part I (6, 7, 11, 14)	4 to 32	4 to 16	17 to 32	28	6.95
Selecting Courses	Part I (2, 12)	2 to 16	2 to 8	9 to 16	14	7.21

Overall Developmental-Prescriptive Advising (DPA). The DPA scale describes the nature of the preferred advising relationship (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). It represents student preferences for advising on a continuum between developmental and prescriptive advising. Scores within the prescriptive range signal a preference for prescriptive advising; scores within the developmental range denote a preference for developmental advising. DPA scores were obtained for both Part I and Part II of the MSW-AAI. The

DPA sum scores for Part I and Part II indicated a strong preference for the developmental advising end of the continuum on both parts of the survey. For Part I, the sum score was 93 on a developmental advising range of 57 to 112. For Part II, the sum score was 71 on a developmental advising range of 45 to 88.

Personalizing Education (PE). This subscale of the AAI focuses on the student's total education, including career planning, extracurricular activities, personal concerns, goal setting, and identification and utilization of campus resources (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). On this scale, scores within the developmental advising range reflect a preference for a reciprocal advising relationship that takes place in a comfortable, caring, and trusting environment (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). Advisors and their students share responsibility for the success of the advising relationship, and both the student's academic and nonacademic concerns are addressed (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). In contrast, scores within the prescriptive advising range suggest a preference for a more formal and mechanical advising system. Advisors are regarded as the experts who address only "nuts and bolts" academic matters and tell students how to proceed (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). When the PE sum score was calculated using Part I of the AAI, a score of 50 on a developmental advising range of 33 to 64 was obtained. This indicated a preference among incoming MSW students for holistic, personalized advising in a warm and friendly environment.

Academic Decision Making (ADM). ADM is another subscale of the AAI. Its focus is the preferred process which students employ in making academic decisions, and who has the responsibility for making and implementing those decisions (Winston &

Sandor, 1984b). According to Winston and Sandor (1984b), the process of academic decision making involves “monitoring academic progress, collecting information, and assessing the student’s interests and abilities concerning academic concentrations, as well as other areas, and then carrying through by registering for appropriate courses” (p.12). As with the DPA and PE scales, higher ADM scores represent a preference for developmental advising, and lower scores represent a preference for prescriptive advising. On the ADM scale, developmental advising is understood as helping students evaluate their academic progress and identify alternatives as well as the consequences of those alternatives. The preparation helps students make independent, informed decisions. Prescriptive advising around academic decision making would involve the advisor making academic decisions for the student and ensuring the student follows through on the advisor’s decision (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). After calculating the average ADM sum score for Part I of the MSW-AAI, it was clear that the combined group of survey participants preferred a developmental advising approach for academic decisions. Within the developmental advising range of 17 to 32, survey participants had an average sum score of 28. This high developmental score indicates that incoming MSW students prefer to use advisors as sounding boards to consider alternatives and the consequences of those alternatives, and then to take responsibility for making their own decisions related to their MSW education.

Selecting Courses (SC). SC is the third subscale of the AAI. Reflective of its name, the SC scale assesses student preferences for the process of determining specific course needs and planning a schedule consistent with those needs (Winston & Sandor,

1984b). Scores in the developmental advising range on this scale signal a preference for an advisor who brainstorms with students and helps them determine their academic course needs before helping them plan a schedule (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). Consistent with the developmental advising framework, students would take responsibility for making final decisions about their course schedule (Winston & Sandor, 1984b).

Accordingly, scores in the prescriptive range suggest a preference for the advisor taking responsibility for choosing courses and planning schedules for students. The SC average sum score derived from the survey participants places the study sample of incoming MSW students toward the top of the developmental advising scale. Within the developmental advising range of 9 to 16, survey participants had an average sum score of 14. This high developmental score suggests that while survey participants value advisor input regarding their academic needs, graduate MSW students also value the autonomy to plan their own course schedules.

Overall mean scores. In addition to the sum score calculations recommended by Winston and Sandor (1984b), overall mean scores are included in Table 4.6. The overall mean scores were obtained for each of the MSW-AAI scales, the DPA Part I, DPA Part II, PE, ADM, and SC. The overall mean was generated by taking the means for the items in each scale and calculating the average for those means. For example, the SC mean was calculated by taking the average of the means for the survey items on the SC scale.

Question I.2 had a mean of 7.28, and question I.12 had a mean of 7.14. Thus, the overall SC mean was 7.21. Using this method, the means for each scale could be compared in a

way that the sum scores would not allow (M. Davenport, personal communication, September 27, 2006).

Based on the overall mean scores, survey participants rated the SC and ADM scales highest developmentally, which indicated the importance of being able to collaborate with the advisor about academic and course planning, but having the advisor trust the student to make decisions regarding academic progress and the course schedule. The overall means for the DPA sections of the MSW-AAI, Part I and Part II, also rated high on the developmental continuum with respective means of 6.62 and 6.47. These mean scores reflected the preference of incoming MSW students for developmental advising. Interestingly, the overall PE mean was the lowest of the means. Although still well within the developmental advising end of the continuum, this result may indicate that students have a stronger preference for holistic advising than for advising related to “other than academic” interests.

Open-Ended Survey Data

Survey-only participants of the MSW-AAI were asked to respond to seven open-ended questions in Part III of the survey. The topics for the seven questions included important advising elements not addressed in other portions of the survey: positive past advising experiences, disappointing past advising experiences, overall satisfaction with past advising experiences, purpose of MSW advising, expectations of MSW advising that differ from expectations of undergraduate advising, and essential elements in the MSW advising relationship. The responses were analyzed by lines of inquiry in the same manner as the interview data, and the results are summarized in Table 4.10. In general,

Table 4.10

MSW-AAI Open-Ended Survey Responses

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Important Advising Elements Not Mentioned in Survey	Advisor knows students as individuals	Variant	"Advisor knows me as a person, not just as a student."
	Availability	Variant	"[Advisor has] adequate time for advising sessions."
	Career	Variant	"Advising on what to do after I get an MSW."
	Financial	Rare	"I would like to be able to discuss financial questions with my advisor."
	Confidentiality	Rare	"Confidentiality is important because sensitive information could be discussed."
Note: 17 total responses. General = 16-17 cases; typical = 9 to 15 cases; variant = 4 to 8 cases; rare = 0 to 3 cases.			
Positive Past Advising Experiences	Advisor invested in advising relationship	Variant	"Desire to help me grow as an individual."
	Decisions regarding major and curriculum choices	Variant	"Advisor showed an interest in helping me to make choices based on my interests."
	No positive advising experiences	Variant	"I had very few positive advising experiences during college. Most advisors did not know anything about me."
	Comfortable sharing concerns with advisor	Rare	"I felt comfortable going to my advisor with issues or problems and felt she would give me the best advice possible."
	Registration assistance	Rare	"Assistance registering for courses."
Note: 21 total responses. General = 19-21 cases; Typical = 11 to 18 cases; Variant = 5 to 10 cases; Rare = 0 to 4 cases.			
Disappointing Past Advising Experiences	Advisor didn't know student as an individual	Variant	"I felt like a number rather than a person."
	Unavailable advisor	Variant	"Too many students, not enough time."
	Insufficient knowledge of the curriculum	Rare	"Advisor not knowledgeable enough to help me with class decisions."
Note: 22 total responses. General = 20-22 cases; Typical = 11 to 19 cases; Variant = 5 to 10 cases; Rare = 0 to 4 cases.			

Table 4.10 Continued

<i>MSW-AAI Open-Ended Survey Responses</i>			
<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Overall Satisfaction with Past Advising Experiences	Disappointing previous advising experience	Variant	"Low; the advisors seemed rushed and perfunctory."
	Positive previous advising experience	Variant	"I was very satisfied overall because my advisor knew me very well and understood both my emotional and academic needs."
	Average previous advising experience	Rare	"Average. Advising was more a formality than a relationship."
	Note: 26 total responses. General = 24-26 cases; Typical = 13 to 23 cases; Variant = 6 to 12 cases; Rare = 0 to 5 cases.		
Purpose of MSW Advising	Share advisor knowledge to help students set and meet goals for career preparation	Typical	"To help the student make curriculum choices that fulfills the student's future career goals."
	Show alternatives	Rare	"Give you the alternatives to help you make the decisions on your own."
	Establish a comfortable environment	Rare	"Develop an open, honest relationship where students feel comfortable sharing their questions and concerns."
	Guide students academically	Rare	"Guide you through process of obtaining the degree."
Note: 28 total responses. General = 26-28 cases; Typical = 14 to 25 cases; Variant = 6 to 13 cases; Rare = 0 to 5 cases.			
Hopes for MSW Advising Different from UG Advising	Advising tailored to career goals	Typical	"I hope there will be more attention paid to my career goals and the best curriculum choices to meet those goals."
	Personal relationship	Variant	"I hope my advisor is interested in developing a relationship with me as a person, in addition to as a student."
Note: 24 Total participants. General = 22-24 cases; Typical = 12 to 21 cases; Variant = 5 to 11 cases; Rare = 0 to 4 cases.			

Table 4.10 Continued

MSW-AAI Open-Ended Survey Responses

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Essential Elements in MSW Advising Relationship	Open, honest relationship	Typical	"Open, honest relationship between both parties based on trust."
	Advising strategy	Variant	"[Advisor is] aware of the role of the advisor and the advisee."
	Availability	Variant	"The advisor should be willing to make time to meet with the advisee and should listen to the advisee."
	Invested in advising relationship	Rare	"[Advisor] desires to be in this type of relationship."
	Knowledge of curriculum and field social work	Rare	"[Advisor has] background information in the curriculum and social work as a whole."
	Role model	Rare	"Role model/mentor."
Note: 28 total responses. General = 26-28 cases; Typical = 14 to 25 cases; Variant = 6 to 13 cases; Rare = 0 to 5 cases.			

the open-ended survey data yielded many responses of variant and rare frequency categories, but few responses in the typical frequency category. Nonetheless, several patterns of responses echoed and illuminated the findings from the first interviews as well as Parts I and II of the MSW-AAI.

Important advising elements not mentioned in the survey. The first open-ended question in Part III of the MSW-AAI asked participants to list additional elements of the advising experience that were important to them and had not been addressed in the survey. Seventeen participants replied to this question. The elements shared by participants were grouped into five categories with variant or rare rates of occurrences: (a) advisor knowing students as individuals (variant); (b) availability (variant); (c) career guidance (variant); (d) finances (rare); and (e) confidentiality (rare). Variant categories appeared in four to eight participant responses, and rare categories appeared in zero to three responses.

Among the survey-only participants who expressed the hope that their advisors would know them as individuals, several shared the desire for a “personal touch” to their MSW advising experience. One survey participant hoped her advisor would “know her as a person, not just as a student” and another participant hoped her advisor would be “interested in her personally and her goals and passions.” Another participant commented that to have a successful advising experience, “Advisors also need to consider the unique abilities and situations each student brings to the program.”

Availability was also important to several survey-only participants. Examples of comments regarding availability included, “It is important to me that I meet with my

advisor more than just once or twice a semester, because that is not enough time to build a trusting relationship,” “[I need] sufficient time with my advisor to ask questions and receive feedback,” and “Advising sessions should be available. It can be very difficult to speak one-on-one with advisors if they have too many students under them and a short time frame allotted for advising.” In these examples, the notion of advisor availability comprised both advisor-to-advisee ratio and advisor accessibility.

The third variant category related to valued elements of advising was career guidance. One participant who noted career guidance as an important aspect of MSW advising wrote, “I need my advisor to help me become aware of the possible career paths of social workers.” Another participant hoped her advisor would “help advise me on what to do after I get my MSW.” Yet another participant thought it was important to have “An advisor who is knowledgeable about certain aspects of social work and can recommend books, journals, and articles relating to specific careers in social work.”

The last two categories of additional important advising consisted of financial assistance and confidentiality. Regarding financial assistance, one participant wrote, “Financial questions might be something that I would like to be able to discuss with my advisor.” On the subject of confidentiality, one participant noted, “Confidentiality is important because sensitive information can potentially be discussed in the advising relationship.”

Positive past advising experiences. This question asked students to identify strengths of their previous advising experiences. Twenty-one survey participants answered this question, and their responses were grouped into three variant categories

and two rare categories. The variant categories (occurred in 5 to 10 cases) included advisor investment in the advising relationship, decisions regarding major and curriculum choices, and having no positive past advising experiences. Rare response categories (occurred in 0 to 4 cases) included being comfortable sharing concerns with the advisor and assistance with registration.

Advisor investment in the advising relationship was the highest occurring variant response category, found in 7 of the 21 responses to this question. Participants noted that in previous positive advising experiences, the advisor “took an interest in assisting me in planning my future, “was interested in developing a personal relationship ... and truly looked out for my best interest,” and “was invested in me personally.” These responses appeared to associate investment of an advisor with developing a relationship that went beyond academics.

In the final variant category, participants reported they did not have positive past advising experiences. One participant wrote, “I had very few positive advising experiences during college. Most [of my advisors] did not know anything about me.” Another participant shared, “I have not had strong advising in the past.” Still another participant commented, “My undergraduate advising experience has not been too positive, and I have learned to find deadlines and register for class myself.”

The two categories of positive past advising experiences that occurred with rare frequency were being comfortable sharing concerns with the advisor and receiving registration assistance. With regard to being comfortable with advisors, one participant wrote, “I felt very comfortable going to my advisors with problems and concerns I had

about the program as well as matters in my life in general.” In terms of registration assistance, a participant mentioned, “I had difficulty registering online. I called the advising office, and was given expert immediate assistance to register for courses.”

Disappointing past advising experiences. Survey-only participants were also asked to recall previous advising experiences that had been disappointing. Twenty-two participants responded to the question, and those responses were grouped into two variant categories (occurred in 5 to 10 cases) and one rare category (occurred in 0 to 4 cases). The two variant categories consisted of the advisor not being invested in the advising relationship, and the advisor not being available; the rare category involved a perception of the advisor’s lack of knowledge regarding the curriculum.

Nearly occurring with enough frequency as a typical category, 10 survey participants reported advisors’ lack of interest in getting to know their advisees. One participant wrote, “I felt like my advisor was not interested in my situation and was just doing a job.” Similarly, other participants stated, “[there was a] lack of involvement with me personally; it was business-like with no relationship,” and “The advisor didn’t care to get to know me and my interests and goals.”

Availability was a challenge that several participants faced in their past advising experiences. Participants commented about unavailable advisors in comments such as, “Be there, please. It often took planning a meeting over a month in advance to talk to an advisor at my undergraduate university,” and “I had trouble scheduling a time when my advisor was available.” One participant addressed advisor-to-student ratios and observed,

“Advisors expect for you to come and see them, but they don't have the time to discuss your career or educational plans because they have so many other students to see.”

Insufficient knowledge of the curriculum was rarely acknowledged as a disappointment by participants. One participant reflected, “My previous advisor was not knowledgeable enough to help me with class decisions such as which courses to take.” Another simply wrote, “My advisor was uninformed.”

Overall satisfaction with past advising experiences. After recounting positive and disappointing advising experiences, participants were asked to describe their overall level of satisfaction with past advising experiences. Twenty-six responses to the question were received, and as expected, three categories of responses emerged. Students rated their past advising experiences as disappointing, positive, or average. The response categories for disappointing and positive past advising experiences had variant frequency. The category for an average advising experience was in the rare frequency range. Participant comments from these categories reiterated specific instances of positive and disappointing advising experiences. Positive and disappointing advising experiences were almost equal in number, indicating no prevalence in type of advising experience at the undergraduate level.

Purpose of MSW advising. An open-ended question was posed to survey-only participants regarding their understanding of the purpose of advising at the MSW level. Twenty-eight participants responded to the question, and those responses were grouped into four categories. The first category, sharing advisor knowledge to help students set and meet goals for career preparation, occurred with typical frequency in over 50% of

cases. The additional three categories all occurred with rare frequency. These rare categories included showing alternatives, establishing a comfortable environment, and guiding students academically.

For many survey-only participants, the purpose of MSW advising was tied to preparation for future career goals. One participant indicated that the purpose of the MSW advisor was to “help me make the right course decisions that will enhance my knowledge to the fullest and help prepare me for my future career.” Similarly, a participant wrote, “The purpose of advising at the master’s level is to help students take the right academic courses that match their career interests.” Several more participants echoed these responses and noted that the purpose of MSW advising is “to assist graduate students in defining career goals” and “to assist in increasing awareness about how classes will help work towards career goals.”

Showing alternatives and allowing students to make decisions on their own, establishing a comfortable environment, and guiding students academically were all categories of responses that occurred at rare levels of frequency. Relating to sharing alternatives, one participant wrote, “[advisors] are there to open your eyes to the doors available.” The purpose of MSW advising, revealed another participant, is “to develop an open, honest relationship between two adults where students feel comfortable sharing their questions and concerns.” A few survey-only participants thought the purpose of MSW advising was to ensure academic requirements were met. They wrote that the advisor’s role was to “guide students through the academic world of deadlines, prerequisites, etc.” and to “make sure I’m on target for graduation.”

Hopes for MSW advising different from undergraduate advising. In addition to inquiring about the purpose of MSW advising, an open-ended survey question asked participants to identify their hopes for the MSW advising experience that were different from their expectations for the undergraduate advising experience. Twenty-four responses to this question were received, and these responses were grouped into two categories. The first category, tailoring advising to career goals, had typical frequency, and the second category, having a personal relationship with the advisor, had variant frequency.

In terms of tailoring advising to career goals, participants hoped their MSW advising experience would have a level of career advising that was absent or unnecessary in their undergraduate advising experiences. “I would like advising which enhances competence for employment, professional goals creation, and considers my very unique abilities/interests,” disclosed one participant. Another wrote that he would like to “build more of a professional relationship [with my advisor] and have someone help me identify potential employers.” Yet another participant wrote, “Graduate school is no longer about exploration, it's about drilling down in a specific area to become an effective professional. I hope to receive practical input about my career plans and course of study.” One participant wanted “More guidance relating to the profession and after school” in her MSW advising experience, and another said she would “need help securing employment after graduation and would like assistance with that.”

Another category for advising hopes specific to the MSW program revolved around forming a personal relationship with the advisor. One participant who expressed

this desire said, “[I would like to] communicate about a wide range of topics in addition to social work with my [MSW] advisor.” Another participant hoped her MSW advisor would “attempt to know me aside from my school work.” Yet another participant wrote that she would “Just mainly like my advisor to know who I am and get to know me a little better than in my past experiences.”

Essential elements in the MSW advising relationship. The last open-ended question in Part III of the MSW-AAI asked participants to list essential elements of the MSW advising relationship. Twenty-eight survey-only participants responded to the question, and the responses were grouped into five categories. An open, honest advising relationship was the most common response category and occurred at typical frequency. Two variant categories, advising strategy and availability, were identified as well. Three categories occurred at a rare frequency level, and included investment in the advising relationship, knowledge of the curriculum and the field of social work, and having an MSW advisor as a role model. When answering this question, participants tended to provide a list of the elements they considered important to the MSW advising relationship. Most did not elaborate on the meaning of the elements in their list. Terms such as “honesty,” “openness,” “trust,” “respect,” and “direct, honest communication” were used to indicate a preference for an open, honest advising relationship. To describe advising strategy, phrases like “ability to listen,” “communicates well,” and “sets realistic expectations” were often used. Regarding availability, participants used the terms “meet regularly,” “availability,” and “frequent interaction.” Responses connoting investment in the advising relationship included “devotion to the student’s successes,” “interest in the

student's success," and "desire to be in this relationship." Concerning knowledge of the curriculum and field of social work, participants described a preference for advisors with "a comprehensive knowledge of the classes offered," "precise information," and "a solid knowledge base in the field of social work." To indicate a preference for an MSW advisor who serves as a role model, participants simply used the terms "role model" and "mentor."

Summary of MSW Academic Advising Inventory

In general, MSW-AAI findings were consistent with patterns identified in the first in-depth interviews. The MSW-AAI exposed several important patterns of incoming full-time MSW students including a preference for developmental advising related to the student's unique interests and career goals, the importance of career advising, and the desire of participants to receive guidance from advisors before being trusted to make their own decisions. These patterns as well as the impetus behind responses to several of the most developmental and least developmental responses on the MSW-AAI were explored for clarification in the second in-depth interviews.

Second Interviews

The protocol for the second interview was established after analyzing initial interview and MSW-AAI findings. Lines of inquiry for the second interviews included questions related to the MSW-AAI, questions related to the first interviews, and additional questions arose as data collection and analysis continued. Consensual Qualitative Research (Hill et al., 1997) data analysis tables for each line of inquiry accompany the review of findings.

Questions Related to MSW-AAI

The first lines of inquiry in the second interviews revolved around the MSW-AAI that interview participants had recently completed. Questions were posed to gain increased understanding of the initial patterns and themes that were detected in the survey data. See Table 4.11 for a summary of the results.

Preference for personal advising. The first question sought clarification and elaboration on one of the primary survey results, which was a preference for developmental advising. The two different types of advising represented in the survey were described to participants, and they were asked to comment on why they thought the survey results indicated that incoming MSW students preferred more “personal” or “holistic” advising over purely “academic” advising. Each participant enthusiastically endorsed personal advising. Participants attributed the importance of personal advising to several factors including a need for advising geared to individual career and advising needs, an expectation that advising is an extension of social work, a preference for personal advising in graduate programs, and a belief that personal advising appropriately encourages students to take responsibility for their own decisions.

Tailoring advising to individuals by having advising approaches that consist of more than “nuts and bolts” advising was a typical theme, present in more than half of responses. Mia explained the importance of personal advising:

Table 4.11

Second In-Depth Interview Questions Related to the MSW-AAI

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Preference for personal vs. academic advising	Personal advising geared to individual career advising needs	Typical	"Everyone is different, and their needs and career interests are different, so a nuts and bolts approach would not be particularly helpful" (Kristin).
	Personal advising is extension of social work	Variant	"Naturally people who are interested in social work are interested in personal relationships" (Gwen).
	Personal advising is needed in graduate programs	Variant	"In graduate school I expect there to be emphasis on personal advising" (Kim).
	Personal advising encourages students to take responsibility for their own decisions	Variant	"Personal advising questions gave more responsibility to the student, and this is important" (Gwen).
Evolution of MSW advising needs in terms of personal vs. academic advising	Personal advising needed throughout time in program	Typical	"I want to engage in a personal advising relationship with advisor and be taken seriously from day one and have that continue throughout the relationship" (Adam).
	More academic in beginning, then more personal	Variant	"More academic advising in the beginning, more personal advising as I progress through the program" (Nicole).
Advising preference for future involvement in profession of social work	Professional organizations	Typical	"Advice about the benefits of belonging to social work organizations" (Amy).
	Career opportunities	Variant	"Advice about jobs and different options to think of after I graduate" (Rebecca).
	Continuing education	Variant	"Continuing education seminars and conferences my advisor thinks I should pursue" (Vanessa).

Table 4.11 Continued

Second In-Depth Interview Questions Related to the MSW-AAI

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Advising preference for future involvement in profession of social work - <i>Continued</i>	Credentials	Variant	"[Advice about] pursuing different levels of certification after getting your MSW" (Amy).
	Volunteer opportunities	Rare	"Volunteer opportunities" (Nicole).
	Ethical dilemmas	Rare	"Ethical dilemmas" (Gwen).
Influence of first interviews on survey responses	Minimal influence on survey responses	General	"I think my survey responses would have been the same without the interview" (Jane).
	More conscious of advising expectations	Typical	"[The first interview] made me more sensitive to what I really want from advising" (Kristin).
	Recognized need to be proactive in advising relationship	Variant	"I recognized that I should bring my thoughts to my advisor and not relegate the process to the advisor" (Adam).
Thought process when responding to survey questions rated least developmental:			
"My advisor tells me what I need to know about academic courses and programs" vs. "My advisor is interested in helping me learn how to find out about courses and programs for myself"	Prefer interactive exchange with advisor before taking responsibility for decisions	Typical	"It's important for my advisor to 'help me' and not 'tell me'" (Vanessa).
	Prefer advisor shares information about academic courses and programs	Variant	"I want my advisor to tell me what [he or she] thinks I need to know" (Adam).

Table 4.11 Continued

Second In-Depth Interview Questions Related to the MSW-AAI

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
"My advisor gives me tips on managing my time better or on studying more effectively when I seem to need them" vs. "My advisor does not spend time giving me tips on managing my time better or on studying more effectively"	Do not anticipate needing this assistance, but do not want to rule it out	Typical	"I don't think I'll need help in this area, but in the ideal advising relationship the help would be available if I need it" (Kristin).
	Do not need this assistance	Variant	"I don't need time management advice from someone at this point" (Adam).
"My advisor teaches me how to access information about registration deadlines" vs. "My advisor tells me when registration deadlines are approaching"	Prefer advisee takes responsibility for accessing information about registration deadlines	Typical	"I would like my advisor to teach me how to access this information because there are a lot of deadlines my advisor might not know about" (Adam).
	Prefer reminders about registration deadlines	Variant	"It would be nice to have reminders that deadlines are coming up" (Nicole).
Thought processes when responding to survey questions rated most developmental:			
"My advisor and I talk about career opportunities in conjunction with advising" vs. "My advisor and I do not talk about career opportunities in conjunction with advising"	Critical to discuss career advising needs with advisor	General	"Since this is a graduate program I think career assistance is just as important as academic help" (Kim).
"When I'm faced with difficult decisions, my advisor assists me in identifying alternatives and in considering the consequences of choosing each alternative" vs. "my advisor tells me my alternative and which one is the best choice"	Prefer hearing alternatives and consequences, and then taking responsibility for making the decision	General	"I am more capable of making decisions best for me than my advisor" (Jane).

NOTE: General = 16-17 cases; typical = 9 to 15 cases; variant = 4 to 8 cases; rare = 0 to 3 cases.

It is much more helpful when your advisor knows you personally and as an individual because they can help you make decisions that are right for you in regard to the curriculum. Nuts and bolts of the curriculum you can figure out on your own, online, or in your guide of courses. It's helpful when there is someone else that knows you but is also objective and can lead you in the right direction. (SI)

In addition, Linda noted, "It is a norm for an advisor to already be working on nuts and bolts with students, but when you think about it people want to have the more personal relationship" (SI). Other participants' comments echoed the importance of the advising relationship:

I think, at least for me, it's nice to know that advising is personalized and not just cookie cutter answers to different issues that you might have. It's nice when advisors want to listen to what your goals are for your degree so they actually personalize advising. (Jane, SI)

I think advising is sort of taking a vested interest in a person individually. Everyone's needs and requirements are going to be different. Giving a nuts and bolts approach without getting to know the person is not particularly helpful or affective. (Kristin, SI)

The additional three categories - a preference for personal advising in graduate programs, an expectation for advising based on social work values, and a belief that students should take responsibility for their own actions - were all responses of variant frequency. Participants who recognized the need for personal advising in a graduate program made comments such as, "since this is graduate school I expect an emphasis on personal advising" (Kim, SI) and "this is a professional skills oriented graduate degree program preparing you not just for academic study but for a field where you're working with people and addressing people's holistic life needs" (Rebecca, SI).

Several participants connected the values of personal advising to the values of the social work profession:

I think most social workers are doing social work because they are humanist. On some level, they are fueled by relationships with other human beings and the positive experiences [those relationships] bring them personally. I think personal advising makes sense because social workers are the kind of people who think holistic relationships are important. (Karen, SI)

Another participant's comments reiterated this perception of social work advising:

I think most people entering a social work program look at people in a more holistic way and interact on that level more so than 'Here is the black and white answer to what you just asked me' or 'Here's some straight advice that I give everybody.' That's not really what social work is all about, so I think people would be looking for a more interactive and reciprocal kind of relationship. (Marie, SI)

Several participants associated personal advising with a sense of empowerment in the advising relationship and assuming responsibility for their own decisions. Gwen mentioned, "I read [the survey questions] as being more personally geared and giving responsibility to the student as well. I found that important" (SI). Similarly, Sharon revealed,

We don't want things done for us if we can do it. We want a more personal relationship so we can understand how to do things ourselves. We don't want to have this 'touch and go' relationship where that is all we need our advisor for. (SI)

Evolution of advising needs. After clarifying their preference for personal advising, participants were asked to describe the anticipated evolution of their advising

needs in terms of personal and academic advising. Responses were divided into two categories: personal advising needed from the beginning to the end of the program, and academic advising needed in the beginning with more personal advising needed toward the program's end.

More than half of participants indicated a preference for personal advising throughout their time in the MSW program, indicating a response with typical frequency. Several participants' comments summarized the remarks of many:

I would want my advisor to engage me in a relationship that is geared toward my individual interests and helping me find a good fit for my skills from the beginning of the relationship. I'd like to be taken seriously from day one and have that continue throughout the relationship. (Adam, SI)

Karen said, "I hope my advisor will maintain a balance between both personal and academic advising throughout my time in the program" (SI). Similarly, Sharon shared, "I like the holistic advising approach. However, there will be times when I need to go and take care of what I need to take care of and leave. Even at those times, I hope there would always be a personal relationship" (SI). Also citing a need for consistent personal advising, Kristin said, "I don't really see the need for personal advising lessening. It might increase as I near graduation" (SI).

Several participants anticipated needing advising that centered on academic requirements as they entered the program and more personal advising as they progressed through the program and began to think about their postgraduation plans. This preference is reflected in the following comments from three participants: "I think you will probably need academic advising in the beginning as you are learning the basics, and gradually

progress to needing personal advising,” said Nicole (SI). Likewise, Amy explained her anticipated evolution of advising needs:

As you get into the advanced curriculum and have more choices, then advising would need to be more individualized than it is for your first semester as a foundation student where everything is lined out for you. As your choices open up the advising experience changes and a personal approach becomes more important. (SI)

Mia had a similar view and commented,

In the beginning the main job of the advisor is to guide you through the program academically, and then once you get familiar with each other the advisor can help guide you toward what's going to happen after you graduate, your career choice, and what you need to get there. (SI)

Advising preference for future involvement in profession of social work. One question on the MSW-AAI asked participants to decide whether they would like to discuss their future involvement in the profession of social work with their advisors. Participants universally indicated that they expected to discuss future involvement in the profession with advisors. The next question of the second interviews asked students to clarify the type of future involvement in the profession they hoped to discuss with their advisors. Responses were mainly of variant frequency, with one typical response. With typical frequency, participants expressed the anticipation that advisors would introduce students to professional organizations that might benefit their social work careers. Participants used phrases such as “giving me options for ways to get involved in organizations that they think would be good for me,” (Kristin, SI) and “it would be helpful to discuss involvement in organizations” (Amanda, SI) to illustrate this

preference. Variant frequency responses involved interpreting “future involvement in the profession of social work” as career opportunities, continuing education options, and useful credentials such as licensure and certificates. Rare frequency responses included discussing volunteer opportunities and ethical dilemmas with the advisor.

Influence of first interviews on survey responses. Results of the *t*-test procedure performed on the survey results determined that interview responses and survey-only participant responses were not significantly different. To probe this question further, interview participants were asked how they thought their participation in the first interviews might have influenced their survey responses and their thoughts about advising. Sixteen of the 17 participants agreed that participating in the first interviews did not influence their responses on the survey, indicating general frequency. Only one female was uncertain if the first interview influenced her survey responses.

In terms of how participation in the interview and survey influenced their thoughts on advising, more than half of the participants acknowledged the first interviews caused them to reflect on their hopes for the MSW advising experience, and made them more conscious of their advising expectations. Julie noted,

I had never really thought about my advising expectations before. The interview and survey really shed some light on my preferences for advising and how much I’m interested in more than just nuts and bolts advising. I found myself always gravitating toward the more holistic side. (SI)

Similarly, Karen thought, “I had never really thought about advising before on a conscious level. It definitely influenced me. I feel like I am more aware of what I want from an advisor and what relationship could be like, which is good” (SI).

For several participants, participating in the interview and survey prompted recognition of student responsibility, at least in part, for the advising process. Adam reasoned,

The first interview heightened my [awareness of] personal responsibility in my advising experience. Going through this interview process I recognize that I better bring my conscious thoughts to the advising process. . .[and] take some ownership and responsibility and accountability personally. (SI)

Jane shared the same sentiment and stated, “The interview and survey made me think about how I really need to make the effort to get to know my advisor and ask questions and really seek [him or her] out” (SI).

Thought processes when responding to survey questions rated least developmental and most developmental. To assist in interpreting survey results, interview participants were asked to recall several specific survey questions and their thought processes as they responded to the questions. The specific questions chosen included three survey responses that received the lowest developmental scores and two survey responses that received the highest developmental scores.

Least developmental: My advisor tells me what I need to know about academic courses and programs versus My advisor is interested in helping me learn how to find out about courses and programs for myself. This question received the lowest combined mean on the MSW-AAI, bringing it closest to the prescriptive end of the developmental-prescriptive advising continuum. To discover why this survey item rated so low as compared to the others, participants were asked to describe their thoughts as they responded to the question. Results exposed a different interpretation of the question

between those who responded developmentally and those who responded prescriptively.

In the typical frequency response, most participants chose the developmental side of the question because they were “turned off” by the language used in the prescriptive side that stated the advisor would “tell” the student what they needed to know. Students expressed a desire to be empowered and to make their own decisions. Linda stated, “‘Telling me’ is what a kindergarten teacher [does]. . . I like someone ‘helping’ me learn because my advisor is here to help me learn, and it is basically saying when I need their advice they will help me learn” (SI). Gwen chose the developmental side of the question because, “[It] gives me the responsibility to learn to ask questions and do things on my own so that I don't have someone else doing something for me. . . This approach helps. . . in the long run so I know how to do those things” (SI). Marie had a similar reaction to the question and remarked, “[It is] important to be empowered because there are going to be times when your advisor isn't going to be there and you have to make decisions for yourself” (SI). Echoing the same feelings, Amanda noted:

I chose the second statement because the first statement implies a kind of talk down approach and doesn't help the student come to conclusions by herself. The second statement allows the student to arrive at a decision themselves and is more empowering and therefore more beneficial to the student. . . In graduate school we are adults, and graduate school is about learning skills that are applicable in the real world and the working world, and I think an important responsibility of a graduate student is making decisions for him/herself and to take some initiative too. (SI)

Participants who chose the prescriptive end of the scale understood the question to ask whether the student preferred for advisors to share information, or refuse to share

information with students and leave students to find the information for themselves from other resources. Adam explained,

If I need to know something, then that is what I would want someone to tell me. When I first hear that question, I think somebody has that information and their choice instead of giving me the information is to ferret me off [*sic*] to some other resource because they don't want to take the time to divulge. (SI)

Karen interpreted the question similarly and said, "I guess what I am thinking of is the specific requirements for academics in the program, and I think my initial response is they tell me what they are" (SI). After hearing participants' different interpretations to this question, it is clear that the lower developmental score for this question may be a product of the question being open to interpretation rather than an indication that students prefer less developmental advising regarding academic courses and programs.

Least developmental: My advisor gives me tips on managing my time better or on studying more effectively when I seem to need them versus My advisor does not spend time giving me tips on managing my time better or on studying more effectively. When asked to describe their thoughts when they responded to this question, it became apparent why participants may have rated it slightly lower on the developmental scale. Responses were divided into two major categories. In the first category that occurred with typical frequency, participants did not anticipate needing tips on managing their time or studying more effectively. However, they did not want to rule out the possibility of receiving advice in those areas if necessary. Nicole noted, "The key is the part that says 'when I seem to need them.' I'm pretty efficient and hope I won't need tips but I might" (SI).

Rebecca felt similarly and disclosed:

I feel like I know how to study and I don't anticipate this being something the advisor will need to work a lot with me on, but if I am really struggling it would be nice for the advisor to give me tips, The other side [of the question] seems like 'sorry, no help here you are on your own.' (SI)

The second category occurred at the variant level of frequency, and participant responses in this category reflected the perception that a request for study tips should be generated by the student and not the advisor. Linda noted, "I'd be annoyed if my advisor tried to offer help in this area and I didn't ask for it" (SI). Jane also shared,

If I'm having difficulty with using my time wisely and studying, then I would hope the advisor would be available. At the same time, if I don't ask for it, then that means I'm not having difficulty with it therefore it wouldn't even be something I'd be interesting in talking with them about. (SI)

Least developmental: My advisor teaches me how to access information about registration deadlines versus My advisor tells me when registration deadlines are approaching. When participants articulated their thought processes when answering the survey question about registration deadlines, their responses again revealed a typical category that involved the advisees being empowered and taking responsibility for their education. The first category reflected the developmental survey response and concerned the advisee taking responsibility for accessing information about registration deadlines. Comments from Jane revealed a perspective that was common among the participants:

I feel like if I know how to do it myself then I won't be constantly going to the advisor and asking for help. I feel like I'm more capable of getting things taken care of if I know how to do them on my own. (SI)

In addition, Dana expressed her reasoning and said, “I think advising should relate to my real world experience. In the future I will be expected to be kind of an innovator and be my own sort of leading my own life and doing my own thing” (SI). Julie reasoned, “Teaching me how to access information empowers me. To do that is better than just telling me and not knowing where that information is coming from” (SI). Similarly, Gwen remarked,

[It is important] to teach me how to find out things on my own and give me that responsibility rather than taking that responsibility ...I think it is good role modeling, and in the real world you have to be accountable for your actions. (SI)

The second category, which occurred with variant frequency, reflected the prescriptive survey response and demonstrated a preference for receiving reminders about registration deadlines from advisors. Mia illustrated this view when she stated,

It's fine with me for the advisor to tell me when registration deadlines are approaching because learning how to access that information isn't necessarily an important life skill. If there's a deadline, then there is a deadline and if the advisor can tell you a date that's all there is to it. (SI)

Kristin disclosed a similar pragmatic perspective and noted, “Ideally, it would be really nice if the advisor just told you [about registration deadlines] because that is one less thing you have to remember and worry about on your own” (SI).

Most developmental: My advisor and I talk about career opportunities in conjunction with advising versus My advisor and I do not talk about career opportunities in conjunction with advising. Participants were asked to recall the thought process they likely used when they responded to this survey item, which was the question that

received the highest score for developmental preference on the developmental-advising continuum. Explanations revealed one category of general occurrence. Participants considered it critical for their MSW advising experiences to include discussions about their career plans, goals, and any other needs related their ultimate social work careers. Several of these responses are listed below to illustrate the enthusiasm and consistency with which participants discussed career advising:

I would definitely want to talk about career opportunities for sure. Most people go to graduate school because it is a path to a certain career. For me, that is the whole reason I'm going to graduate school. (Jane, SI)

I definitely think we should talk about career opportunities. The whole end result of being in graduate school is ultimately your career. (Kristin, SI)

Especially since this is a master's program, I think career advising is really important. I feel like [career advising] is just as helpful as academic advising for me. (Kim, SI)

The purpose behind me getting the master's degree is more advanced career opportunities. I have a specific goal for what I want to do after graduation, and I want my course work to prepare me for that. When I am choosing my courses I want to be thinking about a career path and I hope I can discuss these things with my advisor. (Amy, SI)

Since this is a two-year professional program and we are doing field placements and getting a kind of feel for different types of agencies, it is important to keep future employment in mind as you are going through your curriculum. Part of the point of getting your MSW is career advancement and just learning new skills to get new positions. Keeping that in mind as I go through the program will be important. (Marie, SI)

Most developmental: When I'm faced with difficult decisions, my advisor assists me in identifying alternatives and in considering the consequences of choosing each alternative versus My advisor tells me my alternative and which one is the best choice.

Similar to the previous question, this question received high developmental scores on the MSW-AAI, and participants' explanations of their reasoning in answering the question were closely aligned and constituted one general category. When faced with difficult decisions, all 17 participants expressed a preference to discuss alternatives and consequences with their advisors; however, all participants also regarded the final decision as their right and responsibility. The theme of empowerment was a key component of many participant explanations for their responses. Several participant responses are included to illustrate the clear, strong desire of students to make their own decisions:

Part of advising is not telling me what to do but having an interactive relationship where the advisor literally advises you but you ultimately have the freedom and responsibility to make the final decision. (Kristin, SI)

How would the advisor know exactly which was the best choice? If I had someone to help me list out different routes and the outcomes for each one then I would have a more informed decision rather than my advisor telling me which one was the best choice. The advisor would probably see a few routes that I wouldn't. (Sharon, SI)

It is about an advisor empowering rather than just telling me, so giving me some options as far as alternatives and consequences and talking me through them [is important]. Ultimately, the decision maker should be the student and not the advisor. (Julie, SI)

The second choice seems like the advisor wants to empower you to make the decision that is best for you rather than just making that decision for you. I think that is important because as much as they might know me I would know more about myself and be able to make difficult decisions. The consequences may be more important to me than they would be to them, but those are personal decisions that the student should definitely be involved in making. (Rebecca, SI)

Questions Related to First Interviews

The second line of inquiry in the second interviews related to the first interview. After identifying initial patterns in the data collected over the course of the first interviews, questions were crafted for the second interviews to clarify these patterns. See Table 4.12 for a summary of the results.

Desired career guidance from advisor. Because career guidance was a recurring theme in both the first interviews and the MSW-AAI, during the second round of interviews participants were asked to give detailed explanations of the type of career guidance they hoped to receive from advisors. Responses were divided into three categories: finding and narrowing social work career interest, preparing to obtain a job in a specific interest area, and networking and job search assistance. The first category, finding a career focus, appeared with general frequency. The second category, preparing to enter that career, appeared at the typical level of frequency, and the third category, networking assistance, occurred at the variant level. Like a pyramid, as the level of involvement and specificity of advisor expectations got higher, the number of participants preferring that level of assistance decreased.

Describing the kind of help and assistance needed in finding specific areas of interest in the field of social work, all participants hoped to discuss career options with their advisors. One participant commented that the career advice she sought would be an outgrowth of a strong relationship with her advisor:

Table 4.12

Second In-Depth Interview Questions Related to the First Interviews

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Desired career guidance from advisor	Help finding specific career interest	General	"[I need help] finding my area of interest and exploring career options" (Karen).
	Help preparing to enter specific career interest	Typical	"[I need help] honing my path in the program to fit my career goals" (Julie).
	Networking assistance	Variant	"[I hope my advisor will] suggest area agencies that might be a good fit career-wise" (Nicole).
Importance of career advising from a faculty advisor	Advice from experienced social worker	Typical	"Faculty advisors bring specific social work background and with that similar experience and education that would be a beneficial perspective to have" (Amy).
	Objective advice	Variant	"Faculty advisors aren't as biased as others you might seek input from, like employers" (Mia).
	Familiarity with MSW curriculum as it relates to career goals	Rare	"Faculty advisors would be familiar with what courses could help me reach my career goals" (Marie).
Three major advising elements: knowledge, investment, advising strategy	Confirmed three major advising elements	General	"These three elements are important" (Dana).
Investment	Want to feel advisor cares about them and comfortable going to them, not a burden	Typical	"Knowing that advisors actually care and are not advising just because they have to" (Karen).
Knowledge	Need knowledge of the curriculum as well as field of social work and career opportunities	Typical	"Advisor having knowledge of the curriculum, program, and outside community is important to me career-wise" (Kim).
Advising strategy	Clear understanding of goals for learning and expectations for advising	Typical	"Being prepared and setting expectations for advisor meetings is important" (Julie).

Table 4.12 Continued

Second In-Depth Interview Questions Related to the First Interviews

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Conditions necessary for ideal MSW advising experience	Establish comfortable advising relationship	Typical	"Feeling comfortable with the advisor and sensing advisor is excited about their role as an advisor and are interested in learning about you" (Mia).
	Plan for advising	Typical	"Advisors need to devote adequate time to preparation for advising and setting expectations for the advising experience with students" (Dana).
Purpose of advising at UG level vs. GR level	GR advising purpose is preparation for social work career	General	"[The purpose of graduate advising] is not just looking at classes but also at the professional use of what we are learning and getting adequate preparation for our careers" (Dana).
	UG advising purpose is ensuring degree requirements are met	Typical	"Undergraduate advising is geared toward helping students meet major and degree requirements" (Nicole).
	UG advising purpose is to help students identify a general area of interest	Variant	"The purpose of undergraduate advising is open-ended exploration" (Adam).
Experiences that influenced MSW advising expectations	Undergraduate advising experiences	Typical	"Good and bad undergraduate advising experiences" (Sharon).
	Work experiences	Variant	"Work experiences" (Amanda).
	Informal advising experiences from faculty other than advisors	Rare	"Having meaningful relationships with professors in college showed me how helpful an expert in the field who cares about you can be" (Rebecca).
	Personal experiences	Rare	"I've learned that an important part of my decision making process is talking things out with someone" (Julie).
	Talking with other students	Rare	"Talking with students who have been through the program" (Amanda).

Table 4.12 Continued

<i>Second In-Depth Interview Questions Related to the First Interviews</i>			
<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Learning from past advising experiences	Want invested advisor	Variant	"It's important to have an advisor who cares about you and understands your interests and needs" (Karen).
	Prefer open, honest relationship so advisor can help you think through options	Variant	"Advisor can show you possibilities and open doors" (Dana).
	Learned to take responsibility	Variant	"You need to initiate contact with your advisor" (Marie).
	Now more mature and able to take advantage of advising	Variant	"I've learned more about myself" (Julie).
	Expectation for social work field	Variant	"Social workers who are going to be more people-oriented and understanding" (Linda).
	Need advisor to be available	Variant	"It is important to be able to contact your advisor" (Gwen).

NOTE: General = 16-17 cases; typical = 9 to 15 cases; variant = 4 to 8 cases; rare = 0 to 3 cases.

From the beginning an advisor develops a relationship with and gets to know who you are and what you want to do. They become aware of the different careers that might interest you and could make that information available to you and tell you of the different options. (Mia, SI)

Other participants' remarks revealed not only the expectation that advisors would have broad knowledge of the social work field, but also that advisors would have a depth of understanding of their advisees' interests and abilities:

Advisors could help talk about the different aspects of different opportunities and the challenges you might face working with different populations. How to best match your interests with an appropriate career path that would be rewarding and beneficial would be helpful" (Gwen, SI).

I want my advisor to get to know me well enough to help me see some areas of strength and weakness and help me evaluate what's really interesting to me and what's a good way to fit those things together in a career. (Rebecca, SI).

Amanda affirmed her preference for an advisor helping her find a career focus when she said,

The purpose of graduate school is not only knowing the academic subject but also the field of social work, the workforce, the different career paths, and the realities around social work. To be actively presented with different real life possibilities for hands-on employment experience and having in-depth discussions about the possibilities for my career in the area I'm interested in is important to me. I hope my advisor will help me understand the career implications of the course of study and field placements I choose. (SI)

Anticipating the need for help preparing for their careers in social work once they have a specific area of interest in mind, participants expected that advisors would assist them in thinking through how to move from student to professional, and how to reach their career goals. Vanessa recommended, "Throughout the program, the advisor should

make sure the student is on track toward his or her career goals” (SI). As described by graduate students, this type of career preparation guidance from advisors included out of class as well as in class activities. Amy said she hoped her advisor would “help me decide on what courses might help with future career goals and also what is happening around campus, whether it is volunteer opportunities or internships that would help with career goals” (SI). Mia reflected:

As you progress through the program and decide on the career you want to go into, your advisor can step in and tell you what you need to do to get there by making sure you are taking the right classes, making sure your field placement is right, and then telling you, ‘You are going to need to take these exams and this licensure and you should start contacting these people because they may be able to help you get a job in this area.’ (SI)

Several participants mentioned networking and job search assistance as a preferred form of career guidance. Nicole noted that “suggesting area agencies that might be a good fit career-wise” would be helpful. Kim hoped her advisor would “point me to people in the community or other teachers or past students that have gone into the field I’m interested in” (SI). Rebecca thought, “Advisors have personal connections with agencies or people or fields of research in the field, and they may be able to connect you with people or help you prepare to enter that organization or field” (SI).

Importance of career advising from a faculty advisor. After discussing their anticipated needs for career guidance, participants were asked why it was important to receive career guidance from their faculty advisor, as opposed to or in addition to others such as university career advisors and field placement instructors. Responses fell into three categories. The most common response category occurred with typical frequency,

and regarded faculty advisors as experienced social workers who could share their expert knowledge of the field with the advisee. The second category occurred with variant frequency, and consisted of preferring career guidance from faculty advisors based on a perception of faculty as more objective than other career information sources. The third category occurred at the rare frequency level, and involved the faculty advisor having greater familiarity with the MSW curriculum as it related to career goals.

Regarding the expert social work career knowledge of faculty advisors, Marie shared, “faculty have experience in the field and may have come across some of those difficult circumstances that are important to think about as you enter the field” (SI). Similarly, Karen reasoned, “Faculty advisors bring a specific social work background and with that similar experience and education that would be a beneficial perspective to have” (SI). Kristin acknowledged, “A lot of professors were in private practice or worked in agencies and had a varied background. To get first hand experience from someone who’s been through it is invaluable” (SI).

Several participants valued the objective advice they hoped to receive from their advisors. Linda described her perception of faculty advisors: “Faculty advisors are unbiased because they don't have a personal stake in which area of social work you go into. Faculty advisors have a more supportive role than others you might seek advice from” (SI). Gwen shared, “For example, it might not be helpful to talk with your employer about changing fields, you’re your faculty advisor could discuss that with you” (SI).

The faculty advisor's familiarity with the MSW curriculum as it relates to career goals was a rare response. Kristin was aware that "Faculty advisors know more than I do about the field of social work, and they know the department and the professors I would have in classes, the classes, and the curriculum. They have school knowledge that someone in the field wouldn't have" (SI). Marie also shared this perspective.

Advising elements identified as important in first interviews. During the first interviews, participants were asked to identify the three elements of the advising experience they regarded as most important (i.e., advisor investment, advisor knowledge, and advisor strategy for advising). In the second round of interviews, participants were shown this set of findings and asked to indicate if they agreed with the findings or would revise the list. All participants concurred that the finding from the first interviews constituted the three most important advising priorities they most valued. Dana commented, "These three priorities are all important and look close to what I said" (SI). Gwen noted, "I think these priorities are comprehensive and accurate. I think everything I said was in there somewhere" (SI). Mia shared, "They make perfect sense to me. They are exactly the three things that are most important to me and cover a lot of the things I've talked about" (SI).

After reacting to the three advising priorities, participants were asked to clarify why they regarded each item as important or a priority in advising. Most participants appeared to associate advisor investment with a notion that the advisor cares about advisees and values the advising relationship, and does not consider advising a burdensome task. Jane reflected on the notion of advisor investment:

I think it is important that advisors do invest in me as a person, taking the time to get to know me and what I am interested in. Otherwise, for me personally, it would be kind of hard. I would still go to them for information but if I don't feel they are invested in me as a person I would feel uncomfortable, kind of like I was bothering them. If they don't want to sit down and discuss anything with me and seem to only do it because it's their job kind it would be difficult. It is definitely important they take time to get to know me and ways they can help me as an individual. (SI)

Sharon commented,

I don't want to feel like a burden when I go [see my advisor]. Their attitude is going to have an impact on me because if I don't feel like they want to be there, I think that would be frustrating, like they like really don't want me to be there. I want to be comfortable going to my advisor. (SI)

Karen reiterated this shared perspective and noted,

Knowing that advisors actually care and are not advising just because they have to but because they see you as an opportunity for them to better their experience and give something to another person is really valuable. I would really hate to walk in and feel my advisor thinks I am a burden. (SI)

Adam also acknowledged that advisor investment is an important element in his expectations of a social work program:

Investment is important because part of the reason people get involved in social work is because they care about people. If we deal with people who don't care about people, it devalues our values and sends a message to us that our motivation for getting involved in social work is misplaced. Here I am caring about people, wanting them to develop and grow and improve their lives and make improvements in society, and here you are treating me like a block of wood and don't really care what happens to me. You would be saying that your program doesn't really care about people but is just interested in cranking out students. Do I want to be a part of a program like that? I want to have a program that has the same values as I do. (SI)

The second round of in-depth interviews corroborated the findings that advisor knowledge was important to participants because it is essential to helping them meet their learning and career goals. Consistent with data collected in the interviews and survey, participants said effective advisors were those with broad knowledge of the field of social work, familiarity with local agencies, and well informed about the MSW curriculum. Julie embodied this perspective when she said, “Knowledge is certainly important for me in terms of knowledge of the curriculum, the social work program and how that intertwines with the local agencies and the field of social work” (SI). Amanda clarified the importance of this element by saying, “Knowledge is really important, especially when you are talking about career opportunities after graduation. How well informed the advisor is with the field of social work is critical” (SI). Linda stated, “I want the advisor to know a lot about careers and a lot about classes” (SI). Sharon elaborated on the importance of having a knowledgeable advisor:

I think that [the advisor’s] knowledge about the curriculum program here and outside in the community is important to me, career wise. I want to learn more about what is available in the area, especially since I’d like to stay here after school. Feeling like your advisor is connected and not just plucked and put here to advise you [is important]. (SI)

Regarding advising strategy, participants pointed to the importance of advisors and advisees having a clear understanding of expectations and goals for the advising relationship. Karen noted, “It’s important to be up front about expectations and actually having conversations about the advising relationship. I would like clear communication

about times and needs and when it is okay to barge into the office and when it's not" (SI). Kim shared, "I think advisor preparation is important and shows investment in a way, if they care and don't rush in to pull your file. Also, setting expectations and goals is important" (SI). Julie explained the value of advising strategy when she said,

I think this priority is really important because of course you both want to be prepared for the advising session in terms of the objectives advisors need to meet in getting students where they need to be and in terms of what the advisee wants to get out of the session. Making sure you are both ready to do that by setting expectations and goals is certainly important. (SI)

Conditions necessary for ideal MSW advising experience. Participants were asked to clarify the conditions they felt were necessary to obtain their ideal MSW advising experience. Responses were grouped into two clear categories: (a) establishing a comfortable advising relationship, and (b) having a plan for advising. The frequency of both categories was typical.

To be comfortable in the advising relationship, participants cited a need for the advisor to take an interest in the advising relationship, and to create an atmosphere that felt both safe and based on mutual respect. Rebecca needed an environment where "the advisor has time to spend investing in the advising relationship and is easily accessible" (SI). Mia suggested that her ideal advising experience included the condition of "feeling comfortable with the advisor, and sensing the advisor is excited about [his or her] role as an advisor and is interested in learning about you" (SI). Vanessa said, "You need to know your advisor is interested in your future" (SI). Julie noted, "Both people need to be comfortable with one another, not on a 'buddy-buddy' kind of level but with mutual

respect for one another” (SI). Sharon mentioned the importance of the advisor being honest and “knowing advisors will tell me what I need to hear rather than what I want to hear” (SI). Sharon went on to say, “You have to have a reciprocal relationship; it can’t be one-sided. You need an open and comfortable environment” (SI). In addition, Jane elaborated on the importance of the advisor expressing a positive attitude toward advising:

I guess the biggest thing that would be necessary about the advisor would be being available to me...wanting to be the role of advisor, and wanting to educate me and assist me. I think their attitude and willingness is going to make or break the relationship I have with them. (SI)

The second condition participants named as essential for an ideal MSW advising relationship was the advisor having constructed a strategy for advising. For incoming MSW students, this strategy included the advisor setting expectations for advising with students, and the advisor having good communication skills. Dana stated that to experience her ideal MSW advising relationship, her advisor would “need to devote adequate time to preparation for advising” (SI). Several participants mentioned the importance of setting expectations for advising as early as possible. Karen said there should be “clear expectations at the outset and communication about boundaries” (SI). Julie noted that “talking in the initial advising meeting about expectations and comfort levels” is important to her (SI). Gwen hoped for “an initial meeting to talk about what the advisor is there for, what their job is, what they are willing to do in the advising relationship, and what their expectations of me are” (SI).

Good communication skills were highlighted as essential by several participants. Participants thought advisors needed to be “good listeners,” (Kim, SI), have “excellent communication skills,” (Nicole, SI), and be able to listen to advisees with undivided attention (Karen, SI).

Purpose of advising at undergraduate level versus purpose of advising at graduate level. The distinctions drawn between undergraduate and graduate expectations for advising and advisors were remarkably similar in responses gathered during the first and second interviews. To clarify this pattern, participants were asked to describe their perceptions of the differences in the purposes of undergraduate and graduate advising. Responses were consistent and generated a general, unanimous category. All participants defined the purpose of graduate advising as preparing students for their social work careers. These student voiced support focusing graduate advising on the “next steps” to take place after the degree. Some of the comments included the following remarks:

The advisor is a career guide, and within the area chosen for study the advisor helps the student choose the most appropriate path for the career that's the end goal. (Amanda, SI)

The graduate student is at a phase in his/her life where he/she doesn't need to explore; advising process should have more focus and be more realistic and practical. (Adam, SI)

[The purpose of graduate advising is] personalized because there are less students in the program compared with undergrad. The focus is more specialized and includes preparedness for career because there's a quick and impending future in a professional program like this. (Marie, SI)

[The purpose of the graduate advising relationship] is not just about academic things but about career goals and possibilities for you and helping you decide what classes would help meet your goals. There is more of a focus on career than

undergrad and a level of respect from advisee to advisor as opposed to a ‘taking care of you’ feel in undergrad. (Rebecca, SI)

You've honed in on something that you're passionate about [at the graduate level], and you know yourself better than at undergraduate level, so the purpose is career development and working with the student to find the kind of career they've been working toward. (Julie, SI)

Participants differentiated between undergraduate and graduate advising in one of two ways. Participants either described the purpose of undergraduate advising as ensuring degree requirements were met (a typical category), or identified the purpose of undergraduate advising as helping students explore their interests by sampling courses from different curriculum areas (a variant category).

Among the participants who described undergraduate advising as intended for meeting degree requirements, some participants described the approach of undergraduate advising as “nuts and bolts advising,” (Linda, SI), “about making sure I was getting the classes I needed to graduate,” (Karen, SI), or “geared toward helping students meet degree and major requirements” (Nicole, SI). Among the participants who recognized the role of undergraduate advising in exposing students to diverse academic fields, some noted that at the undergraduate level “things are wide open” (Julie, SI), “the purpose of undergraduate advising is guiding students through different subject matters, helping students explore different fields” (Amanda, SI), and “the purpose [of undergraduate advising] is very open ended...to encourage the student to explore and expand and allow them to make their mistakes” (Adam, SI).

Experiences that influenced MSW advising expectations. In an attempt to more clearly identify experiences that had influenced participants’ expectations for the MSW

advising experience, interview participants were asked to recount their past advising experiences again, and to describe how their advising experiences had influenced their expectations for advising. The experiences that influenced advisor expectations included undergraduate advising (a typical response), work experiences (variant), informal advising experiences with faculty other than assigned advisors (rare), personal experiences (rare), and talking with other students (rare). A common thread that connected participants' accounts was the notion that regardless of whether the advising experiences were positive or negative, in each case the participants had learned something about themselves and their preferred methods of learning that informed their anticipations for future advising experiences.

Learning from past advising experiences. Several themes emerged regarding what students had learned from their previous advising that related to their preferences for the approach used in their MSW advising experiences. These themes included learning the importance of having an invested advisor (variant); having an open and honest advisor (variant); taking responsibility for the advising experience (variant); maturing and being ready to take advantage of advising (variant); having advising expectations consistent with the values of the social work profession (variant); and having an available advisor (variant).

Both the positive and negative previous advising experiences of several participants led them to value invested advisors who were interested in students as individuals and geared advising toward students' individual needs. Mia shared, "I felt like my advisors didn't know me personally and so when I went to them with questions they

weren't helpful because they didn't know me personally at all" (SI). Julie noted, "I learned I want something totally different than my undergraduate advising experience. Investment is important to me because as an undergraduate I didn't have an advisor who was invested or committed to me" (SI). Nicole shared, "In my experience as an undergraduate, I wish my advisor had been more involved in what I was doing. Then who knows I might have left with a clearer view of what I wanted to do" (SI). Karen had a faculty member who informally took on the role of her advisor. She reflected, "My undergraduate advisor didn't know who I was, and then a faculty member invested in me and I learned how important it is to have an advisor who cares about you and understands your interests and needs" (SI). Rebecca also had a positive advising experience with her undergraduate professors and shared,

Having good relationships with professors and really finding those relationships meaningful in that field of communications that I was studying showed me how helpful someone who cares about you and is encouraging to you can be. I'm hoping for another good experience. (SI)

Adam learned that he would like an advisor who invests in him and cares about him from his work experience in information technology. He stated, "I don't want to replicate [my work] experience of watching someone who doesn't really care once again provide inferior service to a customer and essentially that is what I am as a student, a customer" (SI).

Previous advising experiences had taught several students the value of being open to suggestions from advisors. In her undergraduate experience, Dana discovered that "You need to be open because advisors can show you possibilities and open doors" (SI).

In her work experience in the field of social work, Amanda learned “it would be nice to have an ally to talk through options with because I’m not clear on the area of study I want to focus on (SI). Julie shared the importance of having someone to rely on as a sounding board:

Since my undergraduate experience, as I started to make bigger decisions in life, I learned I make decisions better by talking them through. For example, I decided to travel for a long time after graduation and delay my entrance into the workforce. Having someone to talk through the benefits and disadvantages I could gain from either choice was helpful. (SI)

In addition, several participants learned from their past advising experiences that they needed to take responsibility for the success of the advising relationship. Sharon revealed:

My first two years of undergraduate advising experience were not very personalized and you were basically just a number. I learned to do a lot of things myself because I wasn’t completely confident that my advisor knew my program and exactly what I should be taking or what was best for me. Also, I never wanted to ask people for help because I didn’t want to be bothersome. Going through the last two years I learned that I could ask people for help. I learned I want a personal relationship with advisors but that I can do it myself when necessary. (SI)

Marie learned to take initiative and communicate her needs to her advisor as an undergraduate:

I learned from undergrad that no one really knows what your needs are unless you talk about them with your advisor. So being the one to initiate contact when you need help and having an idea of what that help might look like would be helpful. (SI)

Discussions with other students prompted Adam to “take a greater role and be determined to make sure I ask all the questions I want to ask [of my advisor]” (SI).

The maturity and direction acquired since their undergraduate advising experiences left several participants better prepared to take advantage of graduate advising. Kim reported she was looking forward to her graduate advising experience because “it is now my choice to be here and pay for my education myself. This is a professional two-year program, and I’m focused on advising as it relates to my career afterward” (SI). Jane shared, “I didn’t interact much with my undergraduate advisor because I didn’t see the importance - now I see the importance of going to my advisor” (SI).

Becoming familiar with the field of social work and the tenets of relationships between social workers and their clients influenced the MSW advising expectations of several students. Linda was influenced by “my interest in counseling and realizing that faculty advisors are social workers who are going to be more people-oriented and understand about the advising relationship” (SI). Similarly, Amanda’s advising preferences were influenced by her “familiarity with the social work field” (SI). From a friend in another MSW program, Dana learned “advising goes back to social work values and the importance of evaluating your experience” (SI).

Last, several participants credited lack of advisor availability with influencing their expectations for MSW advising. Julie recalled that as an undergraduate, “There wasn’t time to actually have a conversation” (SI) with her advisor, and she hopes that situation is different in the MSW program. Gwen had an undergraduate advisor who was

difficult to reach and thus, “realized it is important to be able to contact your advisor” (SI). A high advisor to advisee ratio in her undergraduate advising experience led Mia to believe that “advisors shouldn't have so many advisees assigned to them” (SI).

Additional Questions

The third line of inquiry for the second interviews consisted of questions added to the protocol to gain new information that would increase the understanding of incoming student constructs for MSW advising. The line of inquiry included the student’s level of social work career focus, the student’s preference for requiring advisor meetings, the student’s desired level of administrative support for advising, the student’s attitude toward MSW advising, and the student’s methods for coping if the MSW advising experience is not ideal. See Table 4.13 for a summary of the results.

Level of social work career focus. Participants were asked how focused they were regarding their career goals as they entered the MSW program. Predictably, three categories emerged: no focus, a general focus, and very focused. None of these three categories were typical responses; however, *general focus* and *no focus* occurred with variant frequency, and *specific focus* occurred with rare frequency. Participants who had a general idea of their career focus were open to new ideas. The response of Mia epitomized the comments of those who had a general career focus:

I think I know what I want to do but I also think that once you get into a field things change and you learn more about the opportunities that are out there. [My career focus] is fluid and I know it can change. I’m open to an advisor giving me options and saying ‘Oh, you are really interested in this, have you heard about these other things?’ to see if those interest me. (SI)

Table 4.13

Additional Second In-Depth Interview Questions

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Level of social work career focus	General idea, but no specific focus and open to suggestions and new ideas	Variant	"I'm somewhat focused on what I want to but am open to new ideas" (Kristin).
	Not focused	Variant	"Not very focused" (Sharon).
	Very focused	Rare	"Very focused in my career goals" (Karen).
	Require advisor meetings initially, then allow advising relationship to evolve naturally	Typical	"Require a meeting in the beginning for the student to meet the advisor, and then it should be up to the student to take responsibility for scheduling meetings" (Nicole).
Preference for requiring advisor meetings	Do not require advisor meetings	Variant	"I hate the idea of required meetings" (Mia).
	Ongoing required advising meetings are important	Rare	"The point of advising is having consistent checking up on people, so setting up a structure is important" (Dana).
	Encouraging advisor availability	Variant	"Giving more time to the advising load of faculty so they have adequate time to dedicate to each student" (Dana).
Desired administrative support for advising	Advisor resources and training	Variant	"Ensure advisors have adequate resources and possibly some training" (Rebecca).
	Facilitate opportunities for advising	Variant	"Sponsor a fun activity or some kind of event where students can meet with their advisors in an informal setting" (Amanda).
	Match advisors and students with similar interests	Rare	"Pair students with advisors who have experience or interest in their specific interests" (Nicole).
	Ensure only faculty who <i>want</i> to advise students are advisors	Rare	"Advisors need to be people who actually want to advise" (Kristin).
	Assign advisors as early as possible	Rare	"It would be helpful to know who my advisor is as early as possible" (Karen).

Table 4.13 Continued

Additional Second In-Depth Interview Questions

<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Illustrative Core Idea</i>
Attitude toward MSW advising experience	Positive	General	"Hopeful, excited, and optimistic" (Vanessa).
	Ready to take initiative	Variant	"I will take steps to initiate the advising relationship" (Mia).
	Open to advisor feedback	Variant	"Openness and willingness to share myself" (Rebecca).
Methods for coping if MSW advising experience is not ideal	Put additional effort into advising relationship	Typical	"I'll express my feelings to my advisor" (Marie).
	Seek informal advising from others	Variant	"I would lean more on others such as other professors or students" (Jane).

NOTE: General = 16-17 cases; typical = 9 to 15 cases; variant = 4 to 8 cases; rare = 0 to 3 cases.

One participant who had little focus said, “I’m not very focused at all. I hope my advisor will help me narrow my interests” (Sharon, SI). Another participant who was very focused stated, “I want to direct a nonprofit agency, so I’m pretty focused in my career goals” (Amy, SI).

Preference for requiring advising meetings. When discussing whether meetings with advisors should be required, the typical response category involved requiring an advisor meeting or meetings at the beginning of the two years of graduate study, and then allowing the advising relationship to evolve naturally. Sharon reasoned, “There should be a required meeting, but at some point it should be up to the advisor and advisee how many times or during what time period advising meetings take place” (SI). Similarly, Amy responded, “In the beginning, it's probably helpful to have required meetings as a way to kick-start the advising relationship; and then it should be up to the advisor and the advisee to see what works best for them” (SI). Gwen also expressed the opinion that an initial advising session should be required: “One meeting should be required at the beginning so you can learn who your advisor is and what they're there for” (SI).

Two additional categories emerged from responses to this question about requiring advising meetings. In a variant level response, several students thought advisor meetings should not be required:

You're an adult, and if you want to pursue an advisor meeting you should be capable of doing that on your own. Otherwise the relationship might seem forced and your advisor wouldn't know if you really want to meet with him or her or not. (Jane, SI)

Adam put it concisely: “Simply requiring someone to show up to an advising session doesn't achieve anything” (SI). In a rare level response, a participant expressed the thought that ongoing advisor meetings should be required throughout the two years of the MSW program: “It's important to require meetings. Setting up a structure is important because advising is a detail that could get lost if structure isn't there” (Dana, SI).

Desired level of administrative support for advising. The first interviews probed participant expectations of advisors and of advisees for the MSW advising experience, but did not inquire about students’ expectations of the MSW program administration regarding support of advising. A question regarding preference for administrative support of MSW advising was added to the second interviews to explore potential patterns in preferences. However, the responses yielded no categories that occurred at the general or typical level of frequency. Six categories of responses emerged: three categories occurred at the variant level and three categories occurred at the rare level.

Several participants hoped the School of Social Work’s administration would encourage advisor availability, both in terms of advisor-to-advisee ratio, and in terms of advisors making themselves accessible to students. Kim noted the importance of “having advisors really available,” (SI) and “asking the advisors to give more time to their advisee load” (SI). Similarly, Marie suggested “ensuring advisors are accessible and that there are enough advisors to respond to students' needs in a timely way” (SI).

In addition, administrative support for advising was also defined by students as providing advisor resources and training. Sharon recommended, “Ensuring advisors have adequate resources at their fingertips, possibly offering some training for advisors.”

Moreover, Kristin proposed “having an orientation for the advisors every year to go over the advising protocol so there is consistency among advisors, and so some advisees are not getting greater care than others” (SI).

The third variant category was related to the administration facilitating opportunities for advising. Unlike encouraging advisor ability, this response category called for the administration to build in special events in the school calendar to promote advising. Rebecca’s comments provided a detailed description of this type of administrative support:

[The administration should]organize events that could naturally help foster relationships between advisees and advisors, like an ice cream social or a day without classes that's just set aside for advising, because one of the hardest parts of advising might be finding time to sit down to meet with your advisor” (Rebecca, SI).

Similarly, Amanda recommended the administration plan a “fun activity or some kind of event where students can meet their advisors in an informal setting” (SI).

The three rare categories of expectations that emerged included (a) matching advisors and students with similar areas of interest, (b) ensuring faculty advisors were passionate about advising, and (c) assigning advisors as early as possible. Regarding matched interests, Linda advised that programs “try to match students and faculty advisors with similar interests as much as possible” (SI). Kristin noted that not every professor should automatically be an advisor: “Advisors need to be people that actually want to advise. It shouldn't be a requirement of a professor; it should be something they really have a desire to do” (SI). Putting forward the notion that advisors should be

assigned as soon as possible, Vanessa shared, “My suggestion to the administration would be to assign advisors at the very beginning, around the time you are admitted to the program” (SI).

Attitude toward MSW advising experience. To gauge anticipation of the MSW advising experience, participants were asked to describe their attitude toward MSW advising. Three categories of responses emerged. In a typical level response, the majority of the participants felt hopeful and excited at the prospect of establishing an advising relationship. Jane declared, “I’m pretty positive about it and I am looking forward to it. I feel like advising can benefit me” (SI). Kristin said she would bring “A positive attitude and an attitude of very much wanting to get to know my advisor” (SI). Sharon said, “I’m just going to be excited, and so I’ll just expect that it is going to go well. I’ll be optimistic; I just can’t see an advisor being mean” (SI).

Two variant categories also emerged in the responses to this question. Several students reported they were poised to take the initiative and put their ideal advising experience into motion as well as committed to remaining open to suggestions from advisors. In terms of taking initiative, Mia predicted she would “Take steps to initiate the advising relationship rather than putting it on a back burner and waiting until a problem comes up” (SI). Likewise, Kim noted, “I am bringing an attitude that I can be responsible for making the advising relationship how I want it and less like in undergrad, ‘Tell me what to do please.’ I am more confident now” (SI). Concerning being open to advisor feedback, Amy shared “I’m ready to come prepared with my goals and with what my plans are for my career, and be open and receptive to advisor input and opinions” (SI).

Resolving to be open to advisor feedback, Karen said, “I am going to be an open slate as far as soaking up what the advisor has to say about what to try while I’m in school” (SI).

Methods for coping if MSW advising is not ideal. When participants were asked how they would cope if their MSW advising relationship did not match the ideal they had described, two categories of responses were derived. In a typical level response, more than half of the participants said they would cope by putting more effort into the advising relationship. Linda reported that she might “. . .reflect on the interaction and maybe send an e-mail asking if my advisor could meet. . .I would discuss something else to get at a different side of my advisor” (SI). Similarly, Dana was prepared to be persistent in working toward an effective advising relationship: “I don’t give up easily, and would let the advisor know what I like and feel is missing in our interactions” (SI). Mia also would work on the advising relationship and said, “I would give my advisor a chance and continue to work with the relationship. If I still felt like I was not getting what I need after several meetings, then I would look into finding another advisor” (SI).

Another coping strategy identified by students was seeking informal advising from others, which occurred at a variant level and was expressed by several participants. Amanda commented, “I would look for ways to meet those expectations with other people like other faculty or students or field instructors” (SI). Jane admitted, “I would be disappointed, but would probably cope by leaning more on others, such as another professor, an MSW student, or someone in my field placement” (SI).

Summary of Second Interviews

The second interviews offered an opportunity for clarification and elaboration on preliminary patterns that were identified in the first interviews and the survey. Data from the second interviews were analyzed, and patterns of preferences were reevaluated and confirmed accordingly. Appendix F contains the final analysis of patterns derived from the first interviews, second interviews, and open-ended MSW-AAI data. The final analysis yielded five overall patterns: focus on the future, comfortable advising environment, advising strategy, empowerment, and learning from experience. These five patterns are discussed in chapter five.

Responses to the Research Questions

How do the mental constructs brought to academic advising by master of social work students shape their construction of graduate advising?

Incoming full-time MSW student participants brought two levels of mental constructs to their graduate advising relationship: lessons learned from previous advising experiences, and perceived value of MSW advising. Participants combined an assessment of their undergraduate advising experience with their readiness to participate in the advising relationship to form their preferences for the MSW advising relationship.

Participants came to MSW advising with advising experiences that were diverse in structure, scope, and quality. Participants reflected on what advising strategies worked and what strategies did not work to meet their needs in formal and informal, positive and negative advising experiences as they formed a conceptual framework for their MSW advising. Among these advising experiences, the undergraduate advising relationship

made the strongest impression on participants. For example, participants who found their undergraduate advisors inaccessible preferred their MSW advisors be available and not overwhelmed with a high advisor to advisee ratio. In addition, students who reported an impersonal undergraduate advising experience in which their advisors treated them as one of many, and not as individuals, were more likely to place importance on the investment of advisors in developing a relationship with advisees and tailoring the advising approach to the student's needs as an individual.

The meaning incoming MSW student participants attributed to the MSW advising relationship also related to their identity development. As undergraduates, participants understood the purpose of advising as focused on helping students successfully meet degree requirements and graduate. However, as graduate students, participants perceived the purpose of advising to be helping them to prepare for their professional careers. For graduate students, the end goal was not graduation but rather entrance into a social work career consistent with their areas of interest. Incoming MSW students described themselves as more mature and more focused on how they would use their graduate degree than they were as undergraduates. Furthermore, participants perceived themselves, as graduate students, to be better positioned to take advantage of a holistic advising approach than they were as undergraduates.

What prior experiences with and knowledge of academic advising do MSW students bring to the advising process?

Participants had experienced advising in their formal undergraduate advising programs, their informal undergraduate relationships with faculty members, and their

work environment. Previous advising included both positive and negative experiences: advisors who were invested and not invested in students, advisors who were readily available and unavailable, advisors who helped advisees make decisions about the curriculum and advisors who had insufficient knowledge of the curriculum, and advisors who established a safe and comfortable environment in which advisees felt comfortable sharing their ideas and concerns and advisors who failed to establish a helpful environment. Additional knowledge about advising came from maturing as an individual, talking with other students about their advising experiences, personal beliefs, and becoming familiar with the values of the social work profession.

What are MSW student expectations for the role of the advisor in the advising relationship?

Expectations for the role of the advisor revolved around three areas: knowledge, relationship, and advising strategy. In terms of knowledge, participants expected advisors would have knowledge that extended beyond the curriculum. Participants identified knowledge of the field of social work and knowledge of career resources as critical to a meaningful advising experience. Knowledge of the field of social work was necessary to help advisees narrow their social work career interests, and career knowledge was necessary to prepare advisees to enter their chosen area of interest upon graduation.

Regarding their preferred advising relationship dynamic, participants hoped advisors would establish a comfortable, caring, and open environment. They described this environment as one in which advisors were available, invested in the advising relationship, and passionate about advising students. In addition, participants desired an

open and honest relationship with advisors in which advisors felt comfortable proposing alternatives and consequences to decisions. Above all, participants expected their advisors to develop a personal relationship with them and come to know them as individuals. This type of relationship would enable the advisor to give the most meaningful advice to students and produce a mutually fulfilling relationship.

Participants considered a strategy for advising another essential element of the advising relationship that provided the context for the advising experience. Advisors who had an advising strategy would discuss expectations for the advising experience with students and have a plan for helping students set and work toward goals. In addition, some participants included a method for recalling or reviewing previous advising meetings and excellent communication skills in their definitions of advising strategy.

What are MSW student expectations for the role of the advisee in the advising relationship?

When asked about expectations for the role of the advisee, participants recognized several responsibilities they needed to carry out for an ideal advising relationship to occur. These responsibilities consisted of taking the initiative to approach the advisor, seeking advising opportunities, researching their questions prior to meetings with the advisor, being open minded and considering the advisor's suggestions, and communicating openly and honestly with the advisor. The themes revealed a sense of empowerment that participants hoped to achieve by developing a reciprocal advising relationship with their advisors in which the knowledge each party brought to the

advising relationship was valued. In this learning dynamic, participants thought they could learn how to make informed decisions that were in their best interest.

What are MSW student expectations for early, middle, and later advising experiences as they progress through the program?

Several major advising needs emerged over the course of this study. Participants anticipated needing assistance shaping their curriculum choices according to their career goals, discussing their social work career focus and preparation, and establishing an advising relationship in which they felt comfortable addressing these needs. Specific career guidance needed from advisors included help narrowing their specific field of interest, assistance with preparation to enter their area of interest, and support with networking.

Participants expected their advising needs to evolve in conjunction with the progression of their course of study. They predicted needing help making curriculum decisions early in their MSW study, and career guidance in the middle and later stages of their advising relationship. Throughout the MSW program, participants expected one constant and consistent advising element: personal, holistic advising geared to their individual needs.

What impact do MSW students expect their advising experience will have?

If their advising expectations were met, participants imagined they would have found their specific field of interest in social work and would be confident in their preparation for the “next step” of entering their chosen career path in social work. Marie

summed up this perspective voiced by many participants and her hopes for MSW advising:

I hope [my MSW advising experience] will help guide me more in a clear direction, helping me put my ideas and philosophical pursuits into an academic framework so I am not just theorizing about things but actually bringing my ideas into practice. I see [MSW advising] as a transferable thing, not just going to school and not just the work world, but those two put together in a productive way. (SI)

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Study

This study examined the mental constructs that incoming MSW students bring to the MSW advising process, and how these constructs influence their understanding of the MSW advising experience. By uncovering the anticipations for the MSW advising relationship that are harbored by most incoming MSW students but are rarely addressed, this instrumental case study enhanced understanding of MSW student preferences for the graduate advising experience. The emic perspectives of participants were gathered through in-depth qualitative interviews and a survey to reveal the lenses through which incoming MSW students find meaning in the advising experience.

Although several studies have examined undergraduate advising preferences and conceptual frameworks for advising undergraduate students, few studies have dealt with aspects of graduate student advising. Moreover, despite the rapidly growing number of terminal master's students, even fewer studies have examined students in professional graduate programs. In addition, few of the published studies in the field of academic advising research have been rigorous qualitative inquiries. This study addressed these gaps in the advising field of inquiry to expand the knowledge base and to improve advising experiences for terminal master's degree students.

A single, central research question guided this study: How do the mental constructs brought to academic advising by master's of social work students shape their construction of the advising experience? A qualitative case study was selected because it was the most appropriate methodological response to the research question. The boundaries of the case were the mental constructs from students' previous advising experiences and their expectations for the upcoming MSW advising experience. The sample population consisted of the fall 2006 cohort of incoming full-time MSW students (n=80) at UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work. The goal of the study was to identify and understand patterns of these mental constructs through data collected in two in-depth interviews and a survey.

The entire population of the case was invited to participate in the study. Data collected in this study consisted of 34 in-depth interviews (two rounds of interviews with 17 participants) and 58 survey responses. In addition, two focus groups were conducted with current MSW students to pilot test the first interview protocol and the survey questions before implementation. Twenty-five of the incoming cohort of first-year MSW students were identified through purposeful sampling, and were invited to participate in the in-depth interviews. Seventeen of these students accepted the invitation, and two in-depth interviews were conducted with each student. All incoming first-year MSW students were asked to complete the MSW-AAI electronically using an online format. Fifty-eight of the students submitted survey responses. Data analysis was ongoing and began as soon as the first interviews were conducted and the survey results were submitted. As preliminary patterns were identified, a protocol for the second in-depth

interviews was written. Second in-depth interviews were conducted to clarify and elaborate on the patterns identified from the initial interviews and the MSW-AAI.

This study described the advising constructs of students in a terminal master's degree program. Thick descriptions, rich in detail, were provided to ensure trustworthy results and enable readers to draw conclusions relevant to their own situations or experiences. Findings illustrate the enthusiasm and high hopes these MSW students have for their MSW advising experiences, and provide a context for interpreting the meaning they ascribe to graduate advising.

Emerging Patterns

Each participant had individual experiences and unique mental constructs that influenced their expectations for the MSW advising process. Nonetheless, several recurring patterns emerged throughout data analysis and across data sources. These patterns included preferences for a focus on the future, a comfortable advising environment, an advising strategy, and empowerment as well as learning from experience. Appendix F provides a detailed analysis of the derivation of these patterns and their attributes.

Focus on the Future: "Springboard to Your Career"

Participants were oriented toward the future, viewing their MSW degrees as stepping-stones to long-term career goals. One attribute reinforcing this pattern included the general frequency level finding that participants understood the purpose of undergraduate advising to be obtaining their bachelor's degree, and the purpose of graduate advising to be preparing to enter their chosen career path in social work. In

addition, a cluster of four notions contributed to an understanding of the participants' focus on the future: (a) career goals should shape curriculum decisions; (b) students need personalized advising geared to individual career goals; (c) career guidance is critical for students; and (d) comprehensive knowledge of the curriculum and the full scope of the field of social work and career resources is required to advise students effectively.

As undergraduates, participants considered themselves less directed, less mature, and concerned primarily with meeting their curriculum requirements. In contrast, as graduate students, participants considered themselves more directed, more mature, and concerned primarily with finding their career interest within the field of social work and preparing themselves to pursue that career interest upon graduation. Appearing in all data sources, this distinction was summarized in the comments of participants:

Graduate school is the springboard to your career. At the graduate level, people are more mature. A lot of people go to college because it's like high school. Everyone goes to college now. I don't think I was really mature enough frankly as an undergrad to know how to utilize the advising experience. Deciding to go back to graduate school makes you think, 'Wow, this time I'm here for me. I've chosen this,' as opposed to 'Mom and Dad want me to go to college.' (Kristin, FI)

In undergrad I was sort of this lost sheep. I think it is more me that has changed than my advisors themselves. I want to have a professional relationship with my advisor and be taken really seriously in my career. I want to be considered not only a student but also an adult and a professional that has been in the workplace for a few years. (Amanda, FI)

As an undergraduate, you're thinking about your major and finishing college, but not about job-related issues. Your questions are more related to your classes. As a graduate student, you're older and have more job experience, so you want specific advice about what you'd be doing in a certain job and what classes to take to get the kind of job you want. Graduate advising should be more career-focused. (Jane, FI)

In the first interviews and the MSW-AAI survey, participants revealed a preference for advisors to help students shape curriculum choices according to career goals. From the students' perspective, advising regarding curriculum requirements and choices would not be helpful unless it took place within the context of the students' future goals. Julie wanted her advisor to "make sure what I am doing academically meshes well with my career goals and that those things come together" (SI).

To afford students this type of advising experience, participants recognized that advising needed to be geared toward the individual needs, preferences, and goals of students throughout their time in the program. In the MSW-AAI and the second interviews, participants stressed the importance of tailoring advising to students' career goals in lieu of the common "nuts and bolts" undergraduate advising approaches. Jane thought, "It's nice to know that advising is personalized and not just cookie-cutter answers to different issues that you might have. It's nice when advisors want to listen to what your goals are for your degree so they actually personalize advising" (SI).

Participants defined career-focused advising as advising that involved helping students find and narrow their specific social work career interests, prepared students to obtain a job in their specific field of interest, and assisted students with networking opportunities. Participants referred to their need for career-focused advising in both the first and second interviews. Mia's comments illustrated these preferences:

From the beginning, an advisor develops a relationship with and gets to know who you are and what you want to do. They become aware of the different careers that might interest you and could make that information available to you and tell you of the different options ... As you progress through the program and decide on the career you want to go into, your advisor can step in and tell you what you

need to do to get there by making sure you are taking the right classes, making sure your field placement is right, and then telling you, ‘You are going to need to take these exams and this licensure, and you should start contacting these people because they may be able to help you get a job in this area.’ (SI)

Participants recognized that for advisors to meet these career advising needs, advisors required knowledge not only of the MSW curriculum but also of the field of social work and social work career opportunities. According to participants, these knowledge areas were interdependent, and no single area of knowledge could stand on its own in effective advising. This pattern surfaced in the first and second interviews as participants clarified their advising needs and preferences. Vanessa suggested, “You [the advisor] definitely need to know about the curriculum ... the program, and the different local agencies and career opportunities” (SI). Sharon commented on the importance of an advisor’s scope of knowledge:

Knowledge about the curriculum program here and outside in the community is important to me career wise. I want to learn more about what is available in the area especially since I’d like to stay here after school. Feeling like your advisor is connected and not just plucked and put here to advise you [is important]. (SI)

Comfortable Advising Environment: “Not Just Another Name and Face”

A comfortable advising environment was another essential element of the MSW advising experience for participants. For participants, being comfortable in the advising relationship meant being able to come to the advisor with any concerns or questions. The participants’ expectation that advisors would achieve this comfort level through establishing an open and honest environment, investing in the advising relationship, and being available resonated throughout the interview and MSW-AAI data.

According to participants, an open and honest advising relationship is built on mutual trust and respect. In this type of relationship, a student could approach his or her advisor without fear of judgment, and be assured that the advisor would support his or her views and decisions even if the advisor did not agree. Linda expressed her perception of the ideal advising relationship:

I hope I don't have to call them Mr. or Mrs., and that I don't get nervous going to see them because they are going to judge me. Being able to speak my mind in front of them rather than having to hold back my opinion and having trust in them would be ideal. (FI)

Elaborating on how she would feel comfortable with her advisor, Julie said,

Gaining trust and rapport with my advisor would be important, knowing that it's not just my advisor that knows me but that I also know my advisor, and being comfortable having conversations about other things than just my classes. Body language is always a part of trust and listening for me, such as eye contact and whether they are doing other things. (FI)

For many participants, the advisor's investment in the advising experience was a condition for feeling comfortable in the advising relationship. As undergraduates, many students had sensed that they were burdens to their advisors, and this perception made them hesitant to approach their advisors for assistance. Mia said she would feel comfortable with her advisor by "sensing the advisor is excited about [his or her] role as an advisor and is interested in learning about you" (SI). Jane stated, "Investment on [the advisor's] part is important to me, so I'm just not another name and face walking through. Just being encouraging and genuinely interested in my success as much as

possible [is important to me]” (FI.). Jane commented further on the importance of the advisor’s attitude toward advising:

I guess the biggest thing that would be necessary about the advisor would be wanting to be in the role of advisor and wanting to educate me and assist me. I think [the advisor’s] attitude and willingness is going to make or break the relationship I have with them. (SI)

Advisor accessibility was another condition for establishing a comfortable advising environment. Participants reported that if advisors were difficult to reach, they would interpret the difficulty as disinterest in the students. In this atmosphere, the advising relationship could not be cultivated and a level of comfort could not be attained. For Jane, “knowing that the advisor is accessible to students and not hard to make an appointment with would make me feel like I’m important to my advisor” (SI).

Advising Strategy: “Don’t Meet Just to Meet”

A consistent strain of patterns related to advisors employing a strategy for advising became apparent as the study unfolded. The observation that an advisor should have a “plan” for the advising experience was a typically occurring response in the first interviews, MSW-AAI, and second interviews. Citing this need, Dana stated she would like an advisor who recognized the “need to devote adequate time to preparation for advising” (SI). Marie elaborated on this concept and said,

There should some kind of plan or something established between your advisor and you to make sure your learning goals are met . . .it’s kind of like the phrase ‘Don’t meet just to meet,’ because it’s kind of a waste of people’s time. (SI)

The two specific advising strategies articulated most frequently as preferred approaches were (a) advisors discussing advising expectations with advisees, and (b) advisors having excellent communication skills. In terms of setting advising expectations, several participants noted that early clarification of the roles of the advisor and the advisee would be beneficial to the advising process.

Interestingly, when participants were asked how they thought their participation in the first interviews influenced their thoughts about advising, they realized that discussing their expectations for the advising experience brought those expectations from the subconscious to the conscious level. This finding also indicated the potential for a discussion about advising expectations to improve the advising process. Kristin noted, “the interview made me think more about what I want in an advising relationship and made me more sensitive what's important to me” (SI). Similarly, Karen commented, “I had never really thought about advising before on a conscious level. It definitely influenced me. . . I am more aware of what I want from an advisor and what that relationship could be like, which is good” (SI).

Good advisor communication skills identified by participants involved interpersonal skills, listening skills, and the ability to focus on advisees during meetings without distractions. Some participants also mentioned the importance of advisors having a method for remembering advisees such as keeping notes or records of advising meetings, and reviewing those records prior to subsequent meetings with students. An observation from Kristin exemplified the significance participants placed on advising strategy: “If you don't have a plan for advising, you won't be able to effectively

communicate with students and they won't get the feedback and instruction they're seeking" (SI).

Empowerment: "Taking Ownership"

Early in the study, it was evident that participants did not want to be passive recipients of information from their advisors. Instead, they intended to take responsibility for the quality advising relationship by initiating contact with their advisors. In addition, participants were determined to be open to suggestions from their advisors before independently making their own decisions. These patterns occurred in the first and second interviews as well as the MSW-AAI.

By taking responsibility for the advising relationship, participants were conveying their preference to engage in adult relationships with their advisors. They knew seeking advising would be an essential part of building a solid relationship in which their advisors could come to know them as individuals. Kim summarized the student perspective of ownership of the advising relationship:

Going to meet consistently enough to have a chance to develop that advising relationship is important. If I only come once in the beginning [to see my advisor], and then look back and say 'She was not a very good advisor,' then I haven't done my part. I need to make myself available. (FI)

By exposing their individual needs, strengths, and weaknesses to their advisors, the participants realized they would be able to learn from the knowledge and expertise of their advisors customized to their circumstances. "Doing their homework" prior to meetings with advisors was another responsibility the participants accepted, and was typified in the comments of two participants:

We don't want things done for us if we can do it. We want a more personal relationship so we can understand how to do things ourselves. We don't want to have this 'touch and go' relationship where that is all we need our advisor for. (Sharon, SI)

I better bring my conscious thoughts to the advising process, and air them out in some form or another in an appropriate way, and not relegate the process to the other person - not just simply hand over the advising process. I need to take some ownership and responsibility and accountability personally. (Adam, SI)

Participants hoped their advisors would help them brainstorm and serve as a sounding board as they made decisions related to their social work education and career preparation. In addition, participants recognized the need for both parties in the advising relationship to be open. As they needed to be open to their advisors, so too did their advisors need to be open to allowing students to make their own decisions. The responses of two participants illustrated this advising preference.

I will be open to feedback from my advisor and constructive criticism if that applies. I'm at the stage where I would want someone to tell me if I'm being realistic in terms of what I want to do. The advisor might be able to point out some other options I might not have considered. (Kristin, FI)

[Advising] is about an advisor empowering rather than just telling me, so giving me some options as far as alternatives and consequences - and talking me through them [is important]. Ultimately, the decision maker should be the student and not the advisor. (Julie, SI)

Learning from Experience: "What Worked and Didn't Work"

To discover how the mental constructs brought by incoming MSW students influenced their understanding of the MSW advising relationship, participants were asked about their advising experiences. The overall pattern that emerged in the first interviews,

MSW-AAI, and second interviews from this line of inquiry was that previous advising experiences combined with identity development and the readiness of participants to engage in their interpretation of the ideal graduate advising relationship influenced their anticipations for the MSW advising experience. Attributes for this pattern included the experiences that influenced participants' understanding of MSW advising as well as what was learned from those experiences.

The most frequent experience credited with influencing expectations for the MSW advising process was the undergraduate advising experience. In addition, some participants identified the following types of experiences that influenced their expectations of MSW advising: talking with other students, work experience, informal advising from professors, personal experience and beliefs, and experience with the values of the social work profession. Whether these experiences were positive or negative, they played a role in forming participants' constructs for the MSW advising relationship.

Reflecting on what they learned from their previous advising relationships that changed their perceptions of advising, participants recalled their previous advising experiences and what did or did not work well for them in those experiences. Past advising experiences that had an impact on students' constructs for the MSW advising experience included whether or not advisors were invested in students, whether or not advisors were open and honest with students, whether or not students took responsibility for the advising experience, whether or not students were mature and ready to take advantage of advising, and whether or not students had available advisors. Julie deduced, "I've learned what's important and what I hope will be there in [the MSW advising]

relationship through what I lacked in my first go around with an advisor” (FI). Similarly, Gwen said she came to her understanding of advising from “what worked and didn’t work” (FI) in her undergraduate advising experience, and Kristin learned from “what I did and didn’t like in my various advising experiences” (FI).

Discussion

Five interrelated patterns have been presented that together form the lenses through which this cohort of incoming MSW students will interpret their MSW advising experiences. These patterns include a focus on the future, the importance of establishing a comfortable advising environment, the importance of having a strategy for advising, the importance of empowering students to take responsibility for the advising experience, and the notion that anticipations for the MSW advising experience are based on what worked or did not work for participants in previous advising relationships. This discussion of the findings will revisit current conceptual frameworks for graduate advising given these findings. In addition, two new conceptual frameworks for interpreting the ways in which MSW students make meaning of their advising experiences will be proposed. Although these conceptual frameworks are not unique to the advising field of inquiry, they nonetheless relate directly to advising for master’s level graduate students and serve as a step toward creating an original theory for graduate student advising.

Revisiting Current Conceptual Frameworks for Graduate Advising

Several conceptual frameworks for advising graduate students have been proposed in the literature. Although the developmental-prescriptive framework was

developed with undergraduate students in mind, it is often used to discuss the ideal advising approach for all students regardless of educational level. The mentoring-empowered model and the working alliance relationship are conceptual frameworks that have been created for graduate students. Although useful, these frameworks may not be the most relevant for advising terminal master's students in a professional graduate degree program.

Developmental-prescriptive conceptual framework. A developmental view of advising, according to Crookston (1972), explained advising as a holistic process. Developmental advising is “concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but with facilitating the student’s rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills” (Crookston, 1972, p.5). Many similarities were apparent in participants’ preferences for the MSW advising experience that are consistent with the developmental advising framework. As in developmental advising relationships, participants expected to share responsibility for advising with their advisors, entering into a dialogue that spurred growth for both advisors and advisees. In addition, participants desired a holistic MSW advising approach that included topics outside the curriculum, including setting and preparing for future goals.

Despite these consistencies, the developmental advising concept may not be the best framework for understanding the graduate student advising experience. This concept was conceived with adolescent and young adult undergraduate students in mind. Unlike traditional undergraduate students, most graduate students are moving from young

adulthood into middle adulthood and have resolved many of the identity issues that confront undergraduate students. Moreover, graduate students may have different priorities such as the career opportunities their graduate degree will provide. Participants did not cite the type of personal advising outside their learning and career interests that developmental advising espouses as a priority in their advising relationships.

Literature examining undergraduate expectations for the advising experience revealed mixed findings regarding preferences for developmental and prescriptive advising. Students appeared to prefer advising from different ends of the developmental-prescriptive advising spectrum at different times. Although MSW-AAI results illustrated a penchant for developmental advising, data collected during the second interviews revealed that part of this developmental advising preference was explained by further investigation of the participants' interpretation of the prescriptive sides of the questions. The prescriptive sides of the questions were off-putting to some participants, and these participants leaned away from the prescriptive responses that, for example, involved the advisor "telling" them what to do or which decisions were best for them. Several participants indicated that because the survey was a forced choice format, and they did not fully endorse either statement, they chose the developmental statement because they strongly disliked the language of the prescriptive statement. In reviewing Part I.7 on the MSW-AAI, Linda explained her thoughts regarding the impact of the prescriptive language:

There is not even an ounce of me going towards the first option where an advisor 'tells me.' I don't know, that's what the kindergarten teacher is supposed to tell you. We were not forced to come to this program. We want to be here, so we

don't want to have anyone telling us what to do, but [rather] be more self-decisive. The word 'tells' is very negative in this question. (SI)

High developmental scores for participants on the MSW-AAI may be a reflection of one of the findings in this study, that participants preferred an individualized advising experience throughout their time in the MSW program. Participants assumed that “nuts and bolts” advising would be possible if needed, and they were clear that it was never enough in isolation. For participants, advisors do not need to focus on their personal identity development. However, they do need to respect the identities students have developed and to customize the advising experience within the context of the current and future educational and career goals of advisees.

The praxis advising conceptual framework shares the teaching element of advising with developmental advising but does not share the emphasis on personal identity development. Perhaps a bit more like the praxis advising concept, participants hoped their advisors would have interests and expertise similar to their own social work areas of interest. Participants noted the importance of advisors being able to give specific curriculum advice relevant to their career areas, and this is consistent with the goal of praxis advising. Praxis advising may be more a more appropriate concept for graduate students, yet it was an outgrowth of and response to the developmental-prescriptive advising conceptual framework. Perhaps a conceptual framework for advising graduate students should be an outgrowth of their own unique priorities and needs rather than the revision of an already existing conceptual framework for advising that was developed for

another student population. The next two existing conceptual frameworks were proposed primarily for the graduate student population.

Mentoring-empowered model. The mentoring-empowered model for advising graduate students contends that graduate students need a relationship based on the advising components of acceptance, good communication, trust, openness, and mutual willingness to grow (Selke & Wong, 1993). These components are intended to parallel Winston et al.'s (1984) five essential roles of successful graduate advisors that include being a reliable information source, being a departmental socializer, being an advocate for students, being a role model, and being an occupational socializer. These advising components are relatively consistent with the findings of this study. Participants cited sufficient knowledge (albeit knowledge of the field of social work and career opportunities over knowledge of the curriculum), supportiveness, and orientation to the profession as important advising elements. In contrast, participants did not highlight the roles of their MSW advisor as a role model or a departmental socializer. The advising components identified by Selke & Wong (1993) are similar to the attributes included in participants' description of a comfortable advising environment. Other patterns identified in this study such as advising strategy, empowerment, and focus on the future are absent in Selke & Wong's (1993) model.

“Working alliance” concept. Modeled on the relationship between a supervisor and an employee, the “working alliance” concept was proposed as a framework for the graduate student advising relationship (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001). Similar to the relationship between supervisors and employees, Schlosser and Gelso (2001) suggested

the graduate advising relationship facilitated the learning and development of the advisee, and was characterized by mutuality and collaboration regarding the purpose of the work being conducted. However, unlike the relationship between supervisors and employees that focuses on employees' future at their place of employment, student participants were focused on their futures and where their degrees would take them after leaving the "work" environment. With a future-oriented advising approach, advisors could consider students in terms of their individuality and what they bring to the field of social work, rather than what students could contribute to their school or "work place." Unlike supervisors, participants trusted that their advisors would be impartial, unbiased, and thinking about the best interests of their advisees when giving advice about current and future opportunities. Although the graduate advising relationship may correspond to the working alliance model in that student participants wanted to collaborate and work toward goals with their advisors, this type of relationship could be achieved without the loaded connotations the term "supervisor" conjures.

Proposed Conceptual Frameworks for Advising Professional Graduate Students

Which theory or theories seem most appropriate for understanding the advising expectations of incoming MSW students? Findings from this study led to the proposal of two conceptual frameworks for advising professional graduate students. It appears that both experiential learning theory and adult learning theory may inform a model for advising the professional graduate students interviewed for this study. Applying experiential learning theory to advising offers a model for understanding how MSW students form the mental constructs they bring to the academic advising relationship.

Adult learning theory provides a theoretical approach for understanding how these constructs affect MSW students' understanding of the advising experience. When students enter graduate programs, most have matured beyond the concerns and needs of late adolescence, and progressed into the sixth and seventh of the eight psychosocial stages of human development posited by Erikson (1959). Nearly all have had at least one formal advising experience in their past that has influenced their preferences for the MSW advising experience.

Experiential Learning Theory. Experiential learning theory stresses that the most profound learning takes place in the way people process and critically reflect on lived experiences. This theory considers learning a cycle that begins with experience, continues with reflection, and later leads to action (Rogers, 1996). Thus, actions become concrete experiences for reflection. Kolb (1984) further refined this pattern and proposed that the learning process often begins with an individual having a concrete experience and subsequently recognizing the effects of that experience. Next, the individual tries to understand the effects of that experience through observation and reflection so that if the same experience occurred under the same circumstances it would be possible to anticipate what would follow from the experience. The third step, forming abstract concepts, entails using logic and ideas to understand problems and situations (Kolb, 1984). The fourth step involves having another concrete learning experience that benefits from the learning that took place since the initial experience (Kolb, 1984).

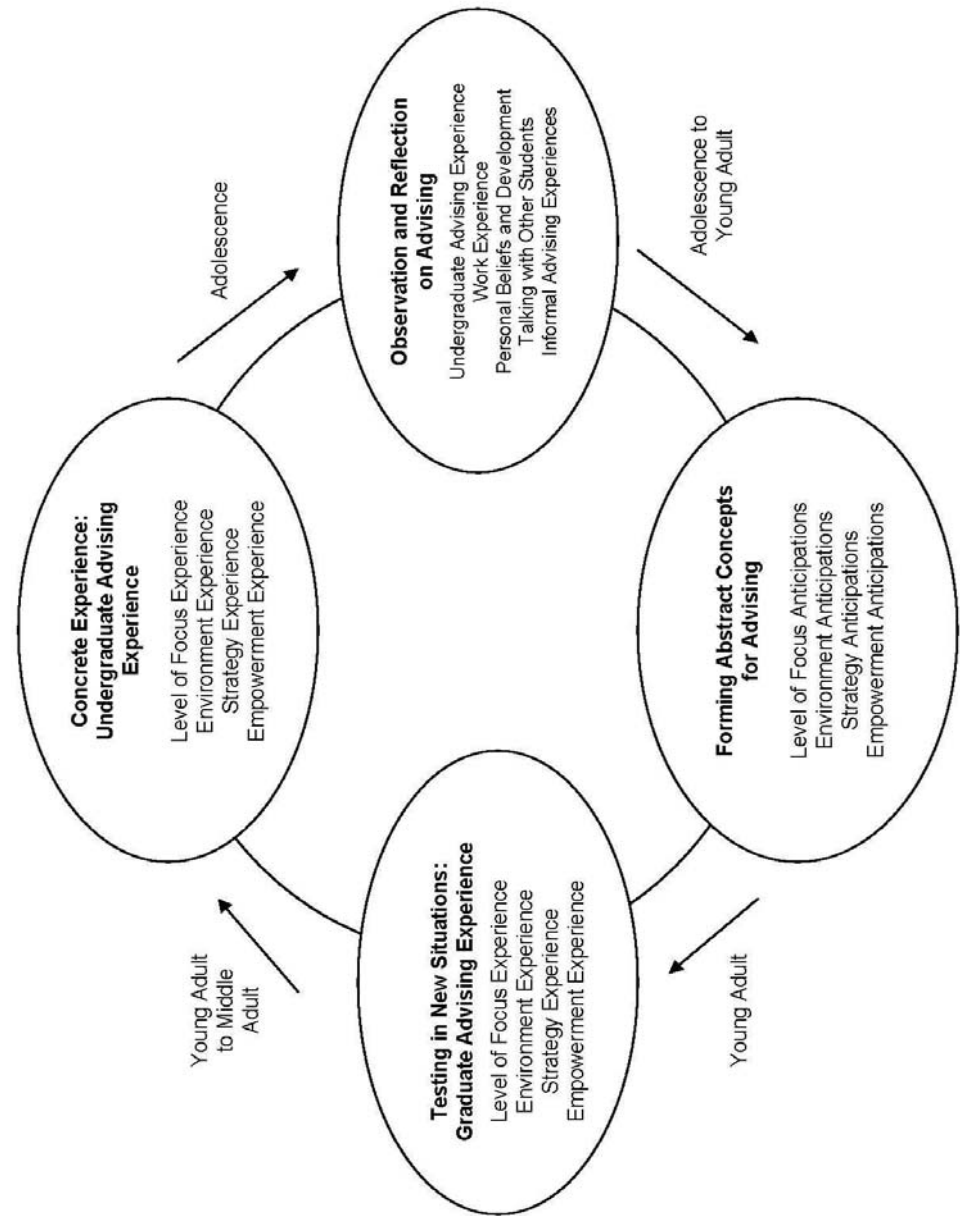
When participants described how they came to their understanding of advising, they overwhelmingly attributed their understanding to their undergraduate advising

experiences. As participants shared what they took away from these experiences, their responses indicated they had reflected on their positive and negative undergraduate advising experiences, and had discerned how they would like their MSW advising experiences to be similar or different. The patterns defined in this study are a reflection of the advising elements participants considered important. These elements have their roots in the undergraduate advising experience of participants and their personal growth and development since that advising experience. Although participants did not explicitly mention identity development, their descriptions of the difference between the roles of undergraduate and graduate advising included their different levels of maturity and focus.

Kolb's experiential learning model appears to fit the advising learning process described by participants. Figure 5.1 demonstrates an application of Kolb's experiential learning model applied to graduate students. Participants had different levels of undergraduate advising experiences in terms of levels of focus and orientation to the future, the advising environment experienced with advisors, the advising strategy employed by advisors, and readiness to take responsibility for the advising experience. After completing their undergraduate degrees, participants reflected on their past and ongoing advising relationships as well as their personal beliefs and observations related to advising. While students prepared to enter their MSW advising experiences, they formed abstract constructs for MSW advising based on their previous advising relationships. These constructs were revealed in the patterns identified in this study. In addition, during the time between undergraduate and graduate school, students

Figure 5.1

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model Applied to Academic Advising



continued to mature in relation to their identities, changing the lens through which they viewed the advising experience. As students begin their MSW advising experiences, they will have an opportunity to test the constructs they formed after their initial advising experiences in new and concrete advising experiences.

An example of such a construct was experiencing an advising environment where students “felt like a number rather than a name.” After reflecting on this experience and accumulating the maturity that comes with growth in age and knowledge, some students formed an abstract concept for their MSW advising relationship in which their advisors took an interest in knowing them as individuals. Moreover, the students learned they could play an active role in creating their ideal advising relationship by proactively sharing their individual needs and interests with their advisors. After their MSW advising experiences, students will again reflect on their experience and the cycle will begin anew. Of course, these learning cycles are ongoing and can occur simultaneously at micro and macro levels.

Adult learning theory. The field of adult learning was pioneered by Malcolm Knowles (1990) who suggested that adult learners are autonomous and self-directed, have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge, are goal-oriented, are relevancy-oriented, are practical, and need to be shown respect. These traits of adult learners reverberated throughout the responses of participants in this study. This section will begin by applying each of the adult learning characteristics to the advising patterns voiced by participants. Next, it will present a tentative metaphor for understanding the

participants' perceived differences between advising for graduate students and advising for undergraduate students within the context of adult learning theory.

According to Knowles (1990), autonomous and self-directed learners want to be led to their own knowledge rather than supplied with facts. This characteristic describes the incoming MSW students who wanted to take responsibility for the advising relationship. Incoming MSW students did not want to be told what to do or decisions they should make. Rather, the incoming students hoped their advisors would brainstorm with them about the alternatives and consequences of different decisions before encouraging them to make their own decisions. Incoming MSW students were eager to take initiative in the advising relationship and acknowledged their responsibility for nurturing the relationship to meet their needs.

As adult learners, incoming MSW students had a foundation of life experience and knowledge. They wanted a two-way advising relationship based on mutual respect. In self-comparison to the people they were as undergraduates, the MSW students identified themselves as older and more mature, more directed, and as possessing valuable life experiences, knowledge, and interests that they wanted to share with advisors in order for their advising experience to be adapted to their individual interests. Moreover, several participants expressed a desire for their life experience to be valued in the advising process.

Incoming MSW students were clearly goal-oriented. There was striking consistency in the participants' needs for educational experiences, including required courses, electives, field practicums, and extracurricular involvement, to directly relate to

their learning and career goals. The students wanted to know how their course work and field experience would help them achieve their career goals. In addition, incoming MSW students appeared to value an educational program that had clearly defined elements: they wanted to know how the material learned in the MSW program would help them attain their goals after graduation.

Relevance was also an important element to incoming MSW students. The students expressed an expectation not only for effective advising, but also for efficient advising, and said they “don’t want to waste time” and effort on endeavors for which they see no reason. Thus, participants wanted advising expectations and objectives delineated early in the advising process. Overall, incoming MSW students had a positive attitude toward their advising experience; however, if the experience did not seem beneficial to them at the outset, or if they were not receiving the guidance they craved, most said they would be likely to reduce the time and effort they spent on the advising relationship. This theme was evident in a typical response from participants regarding required advising sessions. Whereas they saw the importance of an initial advising session, they thought students should determine the value of the advising relationship and decide when and how often they would like to meet thereafter.

Incoming MSW students preferred their learning to be practical and focused on the aspects of the program that were most useful to them and their area of interest. Participants aspired to “make the most” of their time in the MSW program. Many participants said they were entering the program for practical reasons: to get a degree they needed to advance their social work careers. Participants regarded their advising

experience similarly, within the context of how the advising relationship applied to their personal goals.

Respect was another essential element in the advising relationship for incoming MSW students. They hoped their advisors would create a safe and comfortable environment for the advising relationship in which their thoughts were respected. In turn, they were determined to be open to the perspectives expressed by advisors. Participants recognized this mutual respect was needed to set the tone for an open, honest, and fulfilling advising relationship.

To illustrate participants' perceived differences between the role of undergraduate and graduate advisors, I suggest the "travel agent versus city guide" metaphor. In this metaphor, undergraduate advisors are travel agents and graduate advisors are city guides. Continuing with the metaphor, undergraduate students are travelers and graduate students are new residents. This metaphor illustrates the participants' different perspectives on advising that evolved between their time as undergraduate and graduate students.

Travel agents meet with travelers who are thinking about taking a trip and possibly moving to a new place. Travelers go to travel agents for information about how to meet requirements for travel. Even though they have not yet determined their destinations, they know they will need specific credentials such as a passport. Travel agents do not need specific knowledge of the places the travelers want to go to meet their needs, but rather they need to understand the criteria that must be met before travel is possible.

Travel agents may develop relationships with travelers, but understanding travel requirements is a “nuts and bolts” process that does not require personal interaction. Many travelers are not ready to engage in relationships with travel agents because they are not sure where they want to go once they acquire their passports and meet their travel requirements. Travelers might ask travel agents for suggestions about where they should travel, but they are more often than not unready to decide on their destinations when they see their travel agents.

In contrast, new residents have spent years thinking about where they would like to move, work, become a member of the community, and live permanently. The knowledge, experience, and personal convictions of new residents have led them to travel to foreign cities with plans to stay indefinitely. When new residents arrive at their destination cities, they need to be shown around the unfamiliar locations according to where they plan to live and work. The new residents are matched with a city guide who has both general and specific knowledge of the city and its local customs. The city guides share this information with new residents based on their individual interests.

A greater degree of personal interaction is required between new residents and city guides than was necessary between travelers and travel agents. City guides have a plan for a showing each new resident his or her new city, for asking how the new resident would like to contribute to the city, and for helping the new resident acclimate to the unfamiliar environment. Without this plan, the time shared between city guides and residents is not well spent. Part of the role of city guides is to take new residents on tours of their new cities, sharing valuable information. Some sights need to be seen and

understood by all residents to understand the history and inner workings of the city. Other sights are chosen by the city guides based on the specific interests of the new residents.

In addition, new residents take initiative to seek out city guides and share their interests and hopes for contributing to their new hometowns. New residents are focused on how the city guides can help them get to a place where they can begin working and making the contributions that prompted their move to the city. In effective new resident and city guide relationships, both parties are willing to devote time and energy to the relationship. If successful, the city guides will have prepared new residents to become valuable members of their new communities.

Implications

The purpose of this study was not to drive advising decisions but rather to inform such decisions. Incoming student preferences for the advising experience may or may not be realistic. It is up to each program to consider student expectations for advising as part of the whole picture when making policy decisions about advising. In addition, it is up to each faculty advisor to decide how student advising preferences will influence their advising practice. Finally, it is up to advising scholars to continue to address graduate student advising issues raised by this study through future research. This section will explore potential implications of this study for graduate advising policy, practice, and research.

Implications for Policy

Findings from this study beg several questions about policies that impact graduate student advising and about how these policies are established. Following are some

questions that should be considered when decisions regarding advising policies are being made at terminal master's programs in general, and at MSW programs in particular.

Who should drive advising decisions? Advising preferences of incoming MSW students are presented in this study, not advising preferences of faculty advisors or advising administrators. Programs should decide which advising stakeholders should play a role in setting advising policies and what that role should be. Before making decisions regarding advising policies, programs, advising administrators and faculty advisors should decide if student expectations for the advising experience are consistent with the mission and objectives of the program.

Who should advise students? If programs deem the advising preferences of these participants realistic in whole or in part, then advisors need to have specific knowledge, skills, and investment in advising to create meaningful advising relationships with students. The question of who delivers advising services should be considered. Programs need to decide whether all faculty members should carry an advising load or whether only those with a particular interest in and aptitude for advising should take on the role.

How should advisors be assigned? Programs may need to consider how students are assigned to advisors. Students who participated in this study preferred advisors who had similar interests and experience working in those areas of interest. It may be beneficial to both advisors and advisees to enter into a relationship based on mutual social work passions. In addition, it may be useful to permit students to change advisors without difficulty if another advisor is found with common interests.

How can programs motivate advisors to invest in the student advising experience? The reward structure in many graduate programs favors outcomes such as research and teaching courses over responsibilities such as advising. If programs consider advising a form of teaching, and if student expectations for advising have merit, then advising should entail considerable time and energy and advisors should be rewarded for their investment.

Should advisees' career advising needs be met? If so, how should they be met? Incoming MSW students indicated that career advising was among their principal expectations of the advising relationship. If programs decide this expectation is within the realm of MSW advising, then it is critical for advisors to have up to date knowledge of the field of social work and career opportunities. In many programs, faculty knowledge of social work career and networking opportunities is either limited or narrowly based on one small segment of social work practice. Programs may need to consider who advises students and ask questions such as, "Do programs need a career services position?" and "Can advising needs be met by field advisors?"

How should student expectations for the advising experience be set? Based on the findings of this research study, it is vital that programs set expectations for the advising experience with both advisors and advisees. Clearly defined advising expectations will allow the advising relationship to begin with a common understanding of the purpose and goals of the advising experience. For example, setting common expectations would help clarify whether students' career advising expectations are appropriate. At the least, programs should put advising expectations in writing for both students and advisors.

Implications for Practice

In addition to implications for advising policies, participants' anticipations for the MSW advising experience raise questions related to advising practices. Implications range from preparation for advising to addressing students' career advising needs. A few of the most central questions are raised below.

What are the implications of advising adult learners? If incoming MSW students are considered adult learners, advisors should be aware of the adult learning framework. Incorporating the adult learning style into the advising relationship would allow students, as adult learners, to maintain their autonomy and self-direction, know their experiences and knowledge are appreciated, realize both their short-term and long-term goals, see the relevance and practical use of advising, and feel respected. Advisors would need to consider how their advising styles and interactions with students are perceived by adult learners. For example, advisors would need to be aware that students might prefer to brainstorm alternatives and consequences of choices with advisors rather than to be told which decisions are best. Advisors would also need to know that most students prefer to make their own decisions, and students hope these decisions will be respected by their advisors.

How can advisors establish a comfortable environment that encourages a supportive advising relationship? Incoming MSW students stressed the importance of the atmosphere of their advising relationships. For the advising experience to be ideal, participants articulated a need for invested, available, honest, open, and caring advisors.

If advisors agree with these conditions for advising, they may want to consider their demeanor and the ways in which they engage with advisees.

How will advisors prepare and plan for the advising relationship? According to participants, advisors should carefully consider the strategy they will employ in the advising relationship. Such a strategy might include obtaining knowledge and skills relevant for advising. In addition, it might include an initial meeting with advisees to discuss and set expectations for the advising relationship. Advisors should be aware that students enter the graduate advising process with vastly different advising experiences, and that students construct their expectations and hopes for the MSW advising relationship based on these experiences.

How should advisors balance students' need for information with students' preference for personalized advising and career advising needs? Participants expressed an interest in personalized advising throughout their time in the MSW program. Although participants realized the importance of advice regarding curriculum decisions, they consistently articulated a preference that this curriculum advice be couched in the context of their individual learning and career goals. Furthermore, participants expected career guidance. In their interactions with MSW advisees, advisors should communicate with advisees regarding their role in career advising, and develop the knowledge, skills, and awareness necessary for that role.

Implications for Research

Although responding to one central research question, several new research questions emerged from this study. These research questions have implications for

understanding professional graduate student advising in general and MSW student advising in particular. These questions include the following:

How are graduate student advising needs different from or similar to undergraduate advising needs? After noting a distinct difference in expectations for the undergraduate and graduate experiences of the students who were interviewed, this question should be posed on a larger scale to move further toward developing a conceptual framework for master's level advising. Based on these findings, the advising needs of master's level graduate students are profoundly different from the advising needs of undergraduate students. Thus, it would be inappropriate to assume that undergraduate advising research generalizes to the master's student population.

How do the advising preferences of incoming MSW students evolve as they matriculate through the program? Interviewing the participants from this study after they complete of their first year in the MSW program and again as they approach graduation would be valuable. Results would yield how students' construction of the MSW advising experience changes and would offer an opportunity to learn how students progress through Kolb's experiential learning model as they have new advising experiences, reflect on those experiences, form abstract concepts about those experiences, and test those concepts in new situations.

Do the anticipations for advising brought by incoming MSW students influence their satisfaction with their MSW advising experience? This study explored incoming MSW student anticipations for the advising experience. Future research should address whether students use these advising anticipations as criteria for evaluating their

satisfaction with MSW advising. Findings would offer insight into how significant a role expectations for the advising experience play in students' interpretation of that experience.

Do demographic differences influence MSW student constructions of the advising experience? The number of MSW-AAI participants was not large or diverse enough to warrant aggregation of data and perform analysis of variance to look for demographic differences in advising preferences. A new research study might distribute the MSW-AAI to a wider audience at multiple professional graduate programs, multiple MSW programs, or different MSW cohorts such as the distance education MSW program and the Advanced Standing MSW program. A larger and more diverse sample population would enable researchers to aggregate data to look for demographic differences.

How do advisors of graduate students and graduate advising administrators conceptualize the ideal MSW graduate student advising experience? As a first step toward a conceptual framework for advising MSW students, this study asked students about their ideal advising experiences. Given the constructs for advising identified in this study, how are MSW programs currently defining the breadth and depth of the MSW advisor's role? Are the advising preferences identified by participants currently being addressed in MSW programs? To move further toward a theory for MSW advising, questions along the lines of inquiry explored in this study would need to be posed to advisors of MSW students as well as MSW advising administrators to identify congruence and incongruence between the three populations.

What is an appropriate conceptual framework for advising professional graduate students? By addressing the aforementioned research questions, advising scholars will move closer to developing a conceptual framework for advising professional graduate students. Clearly, this framework will reflect the goals and missions of professional graduate programs that are unique from other types of higher education degree programs. Input from the multiple and diverse perspectives of graduate advisors, graduate advising administrators, and graduate students will aid in this ongoing search for an original conceptual framework for advising professional graduate students.

Conclusion

Academic advising is an emerging profession with an expanding field of inquiry that focuses mainly on effective advising for the undergraduate student population. As the number of master's programs and master's degrees conferred increases, the effectiveness of advising for the graduate student population is an issue that needs to be addressed. This study takes a first step toward conceptualizing a framework for advising graduate master's students by exploring the constructs incoming MSW students bring to advising and how their understanding of the role of advising shapes their preferences for the MSW advising relationship. Findings suggest that as students enter the MSW program they bring with them what they have learned from previous advising relationships as well as the hope that their advisors will establish comfortable advising environments, be equipped with advising strategies and the skills necessary for advising, engage and empower students, and help students focus on their post-MSW career goals. Based on these patterns, Kolb's experiential learning theory and Knowles' characteristics

of adult learners have been proposed as possible conceptual frameworks for graduate student advising. These theories provide frameworks for understanding how incoming MSW students make meaning of the advising experience and offer advising administrators, practitioners, and scholars a context for interpreting and enhancing the graduate advising relationship.

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APPENDIX A: PROTOCOLS

Focus Group One Protocol

Hello, my name is Sarah Naylor, and I am the facilitator for this discussion. The purpose of this discussion is to secure important reactions and advice from you, based on your own perceptions of academic advising. The results will be used to refine interview questions for an upcoming research study on the expectations of incoming MSW students for the advising experience. Therefore, it is important that you respond to these questions based on your MSW advising EXPECTATIONS, not your MSW advising EXPERIENCE.

Disclosures and Ground Rules

1. *Go over consent form verbally and ask all participants to sign two copies of the form, one copy for them to keep and one copy for my records.*
2. I will be audio taping this focus group. Does anyone have any objection to this taping? When the tape is transcribed, names will not be recorded. The sole concern today is with what was said, not who said it. Please only use your first names as you speak, and do not use specific names of individuals during our conversation. Please try to remember to say your name as you begin to speak (and speak up) so that I can accurately transcribe the discussion.
3. During the discussion, I'm not planning on doing most of the talking. I do want to make sure that we cover a number of topics in a limited amount of time, so I'll try to keep things moving. There is no need to raise hands, but please speak one at a time and do not interrupt the other speakers.
4. Even though I am here to keep conversation "on track," you do not need to address your remarks to me. Feel free to add to a statement by one of your fellow group members, as long as we keep to the general topic under discussion. If your perceptions are the same or different from those of someone who has spoken, it is important that you say so.
5. It is important that you tell the group what is true for you and why it is true – even though you might be the only person in the room who has expressed the viewpoint or opinion you state. Again, there are no right answers to many of the questions we ask, beyond our own views.
6. When the discussion is over, please respect the privacy of your fellow group members and do not repeat comments others make during our discussion to anyone outside of this group.
7. Before we begin I want to emphasize that you are the experts here today. The reason we are here is to better understand your expectations for the MSW advising experience so that we can
8. Our time together may last up to about 90 minutes. Is there anyone who can't stay? Before we begin, are there any questions about how we will be conducting this discussion?

Introductions

Please introduce yourself (by your first name only) and tell us your current status in the graduate program at the School of Social Work.

Lines of Inquiry

1. Try to imagine your understanding of academic advising before you entered the MSW program and respond to the following questions:
 - What can you tell me about your advising experiences before your arrival at the School of Social Work? Can you think of an example of a time when advising was particularly helpful to you (prior to coming to SSW)? What about a time when advising was disappointing or not helpful (prior to coming to SSW)?
 - What was your understanding of the purpose of academic advising when you entered the MSW program? How do you think you came to this understanding?
 - What role did you hope academic advising would play in your graduate study and/or beyond?
2. Try to imagine your preferences for the role of the advisee before you entered the MSW program and respond to the following questions:
 - Academic advising involves a relationship between the advisor and you, the advisee. What were your preferences for your role in the advising relationship?
 - What were some specific examples of expectations that you had for yourself in this relationship?
3. Try to imagine your preferences for the role of the advisor before you entered the MSW program and respond to the following questions:
 - What were your preferences for the role of your academic advisor in the advising relationship? (What kind of advising did you anticipate needing from your advisor?)
 - What were some specific examples of expectations that you had of your academic advisor? (If you were an academic advisor, how would you prepare for your role as an advisor and for meetings with advisees?)
4. Think about the evolution of your advising preference from the time you learned about academic advising through the time you entered the MSW program.
 - Can you describe any preferences you had for your graduate advising experience that were different from your expectations or experiences with undergraduate advising?
 - What were your preferences for the early, middle, and later advising experiences as you progressed through the program?
5. Concluding questions
 - What effect/impact did you expect your advising experience to have if your expectations were met?

- If you were going to rank some of the things you listed as important to you in the advising relationship, what would you rank as the three or four most important?
- Is there anything we haven't touched on that you think is important that you would like to say regarding your expectations as an advisee or of an advisor or of the advising relationship?

6. Focus Group Conclusion

- Would you add any questions to this interview protocol or ask any of the current questions in a different way?

Thank you very much for your participation. Your feedback will be very useful to me as I try to understand the advising needs of MSW students. It is all right to talk to others about what we discussed here today, but please remember to respect each other's privacy, and don't mention anyone's name outside this room.

If I have any additional questions or need clarification on any of the points that were made here today, may I contact you?

Thanks so much – you are free to go!

Focus Group Two Protocol

Hello, my name is Sarah Naylor, and I am the facilitator for this discussion. The purpose of this discussion is to secure important reactions and advice from you, based on your own perceptions of academic advising. The results will be used to refine interview questions for an upcoming research study on the expectations of incoming MSW students for the advising experience. Therefore, it is important that you respond to these questions based on your MSW advising EXPECTATIONS, not your MSW advising EXPERIENCE.

Disclosures and Ground Rules

1. Go over consent form verbally and ask all participants to sign two copies of the form, one copy for them to keep and one copy for my records.
2. I will be audio taping this focus group. Does anyone have any objection to this taping? When the tape is transcribed, names will not be recorded. The sole concern today is with what was said, not who said it. Please only use your first names as you speak, and do not use specific names of individuals during our conversation. Please try to remember to say your name as you begin to speak (and speak up) so that I can accurately transcribe the discussion. There is no need to raise hands, but please speak one at a time and do not interrupt the other speakers.
3. During the discussion, I'm not planning on doing most of the talking. I do want to make sure that we cover a number of topics in a limited amount of time, so I'll try to keep things moving.
4. Even though I am here to keep conversation "on track," you do not need to address your remarks to me. Feel free to add to a statement by one of your fellow group members, as long as we keep to the general topic under discussion. If your perceptions are the same or different from those of someone who has spoken, it is important that you say so. Again, there are no right answers to many of the questions we ask, beyond our own views.
5. When the discussion is over, please respect the privacy of your fellow group members and do not repeat comments others make during our discussion to anyone outside of this group.
6. Before we begin I want to emphasize that you are the experts here today. I am here to listen to you.
7. Our time together may last up to about 90 minutes. Is there anyone who can't stay for the entire session? Before we begin, are there any questions about how we will be conducting this discussion?

Introductions

Please introduce yourself (by your first name only) and tell us your current status in the graduate program at the School of Social Work.

Today I'd like you to help me pilot test questions for the questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire consists of objective questions that you will answer individually,

and the second part of the questionnaire consists of open-ended questions that we will discuss as a group.

1. Let's begin by completing the first part of the questionnaire and discussing the second part:
 - A. For the objective questions:
Please answer all of the questions as best you can.
Please mark any questions that you do not understand or are hard for you to answer with an asterisk.
 - B. Discussion: Try to imagine your understanding of academic advising before you entered the MSW program and respond to the following questions:
 - Are there any elements of the advising experience that are important to you and have not been addressed in this survey? What are they, and why are they important to you?
 - What do you feel were the strengths of your previous advising experiences?
 - Were there any challenges or times when you were disappointed with your previous advising experiences?
 - Can you describe any preferences you have for your graduate advising experience that are different from your expectations or experiences with undergraduate advising?
 - In one sentence, how would you describe the purpose of advising?
 - If you were going to rank some of the things you listed as important to you in the advising relationship, what would you rank as the three or four most important?
 - Is there anything we haven't touched on that you think is important that you would like to say regarding your expectations as an advisee or of an advisor or of the advising relationship?
2. Let's now discuss how you felt as you were responding to the questions.
 - A. How did you feel as you were responding to the closed-ended survey questions? Did they make sense? Would you reword or add any questions in the second part of the survey? Would you add any questions to it or ask any of the current questions in a different way?
 - B. How did you feel as you were responding to the open-ended survey questions? Did they make sense? Would you reword or add any questions in the second part of the survey? Would you add any questions to it or ask any of the current questions in a different way?

Thank you very much for your participation. Your feedback will be very useful to me as I try to understand the advising needs of MSW students. It is all right to talk to others about what we discussed here today, but please remember to respect each other's privacy, and don't mention anyone's name outside this room.

If I have any additional questions or need clarification on any of the points that were made here today, may I contact you?

Thanks so much – you are free to go!

First In-depth Interview Protocol

Lines of Inquiry:

1. Understanding of academic advising

- What can you tell me about your past academic experiences? Can you think of an example of a time when advising was particularly helpful to you? What about a time when advising was disappointing or not helpful?
- What do you think is the purpose of academic advising? How do you think you came to this understanding?
- What role do you hope academic advising will play in your graduate study?

2. Advisor preferences

- What are your preferences for the role of your academic advisor in the advising relationship? (What kind of advising do you anticipate needing from your advisor?)
- What are some specific examples of expectations that you have of your academic advisor? (What should be in the “job description” of an advisor – what knowledge/skills would you expect your advisor to have? If you were an academic advisor, how would you prepare for your role as an advisor and for meetings with advisees?)

3. Advisee preferences

- Academic advising involves a relationship between the advisor and you, the advisee. What are your preferences for your role in the advising relationship?

- What are some specific examples of expectations that you have for yourself in this relationship? (What should be in the “job description” of an advisee? As an advisee, how will you prepare for your role as an advisor and for meetings with advisees?)
4. Evolution of advising preferences
- Can you describe any preferences you have for your graduate advising experience that are different from your expectations or experiences with undergraduate advising?
 - Can you think of how your advising needs might change or evolve as you progress through the program?
5. Concluding questions
- What effect/impact do you expect your graduate advising experience to have if your expectations are met?
 - If you were going to rank some of the things you listed as important to you in the advising relationship, what would you rank as the three or four most important?
 - Is there anything we haven’t touched on that you think is important and would like to say regarding your expectations as an advisee or of an advisor or of the advising relationship?
 - Demographic questions
 1. What is your gender?
 - (a) male
 - (b) female

2. What is your primary cultural/racial background?

- (a) African American/Black
- (b) Hispanic American/Latino/a Pacific Islander
- (c) Asian American or
- (d) Native American
- (e) White/Caucasian
- (f) Biracial/multiracial
- (g) Other
- (h) Decline to respond

3. What was your age at your last birthday?

4. Previous Areas of Study

a. Did you graduate from a private or public university for your undergraduate degree? What was the approximate number of undergraduate students at that institution?

b. What was your undergraduate major(s) area of study?

c. Did you have an undergraduate minor area of study? What was it?

d. Do you hold any additional degrees? If so, what were the degrees and what were your major areas of study?

5. Would you be willing to be contacted to participate in the final phase of this study, reviewing and commenting on some of the major findings?

Second In-depth Interview Protocol

Questions related to survey:

- Some advising experts distinguish between two different kinds of advising: “personal” (advisor is personally acquainted with students and view advising as holistic and geared toward the individual) and “academic” (advisor provides information about curriculum policies and procedures). Survey and interview results indicate that most students prefer more “personal” advising. Why do you think this might be?
- What were your thought processes as you responded to the following questions on the survey:
 - Most prescriptive responses*
 - “My advisor tells me what I need to know about academic courses and programs” vs. “My advisor is interested in helping me learn how to find out about courses and programs for myself”?
 - “My advisor gives me tips on managing my time better or on studying more effectively when I seem to need them” vs. “My advisor does not spend time giving me tips on managing my time better or on studying more effectively”
 - “My advisor teaches me how to access information about registration deadlines” vs. “My advisor tells me when registration deadlines are approaching”
 - Most developmental responses*
 - “My advisor and I talk about career opportunities in conjunction with advising” vs. “My advisor and I do not talk about career opportunities in conjunction with advising”
 - “When I’m faced with difficult decisions, my advisor assists me in identifying alternatives and in considering the consequences of choosing each alternative” vs. “My advisor tells me my alternative and which one is the best choice”
- What kind of future involvement in social work do you hope your advisor will discuss with you?
- As you progress through the program, how do you see your advising needs changing, if at all (in terms of academic vs. personal advising)?
- How did thinking about the advising process during your first interview influence your survey responses and your thoughts about advising?

Questions related to first interviews:

- Discussing career opportunities is the survey response students rated “most important” and is also one of the most prominent themes from the first interview. Most students seem to think it’s important to have faculty advisors who are engaged with them on a continuing basis about their “next steps” after graduation. Please talk me through how advisors can help you prepare for a career in social work. How is the social work career perspective of your faculty advisor different from that of your field instructor or a member of the university career services staff?
- *Share handout.* The three most important elements of the advising experience that emerged in the first interviews seem to be: investment (commitment to advising, attitude, and presence of the advisor), knowledge (curriculum, SSW program, university, community, local agencies, field of social work), and the advisor’s advising strategy (preparation for advising, setting expectations and goals with advisees, presenting alternatives and engaging in discussion about those alternatives). What’s your reaction to these priorities? Why/how/in what way are these elements of the advising relationship and process important to you?
- What kinds of conditions are necessary in order to have an effective advisor-advisee relationship?
- In your first interview, I asked you to define the purpose of advising. I’d like to clarify this question by asking you two questions. What do you see as the major purpose(s) of advising at the undergraduate level? What about at the graduate level?
- What experiences have impacted your MSW advising expectations, and how have they done so? (*previous advising experiences, work experiences, personal experiences, etc.*) Are there any specific advising experiences that you learned from and changed your way of thinking about advising?

Additional Questions:

- How focused are you in terms of your goals and what you want to do after you graduate?
- Should meetings between advisors and advisees be required?
- Administrative Support for Advising
 - If you were to talk with the dean about how the School of Social Work could foster a healthy climate for advising, what would you suggest?
 - If you were to recommend to the dean ways the advising program at the School of Social Work could meet student needs, what would you recommend?

- What attitude will you bring to the advising process?
- How will you cope if your initial advising experience isn't consistent with your ideal experience?

Give inducement for participating in the study.

Second Interview Handout

- What were your thought processes as you responded to the following questions on the survey:
 - “My advisor tells me what I need to know about academic courses and programs” vs. “My advisor is interested in helping me learn how to find out about courses and programs for myself”
 - “My advisor gives me tips on managing my time better or on studying more effectively when I seem to need them” vs. “My advisor does not spend time giving me tips on managing my time better or on studying more effectively”
 - “My advisor teaches me how to access information about registration deadlines” vs. “My advisor tells me when registration deadlines are approaching”
 - “My advisor and I talk about career opportunities in conjunction with advising” vs. “My advisor and I do not talk about career opportunities in conjunction with advising”
 - “When I’m faced with difficult decisions, my advisor assists me in identifying alternatives and in considering the consequences of choosing each alternative” vs. “my advisor tells me my alternative and which one is the best choice”

The three most important elements of the advising experience that emerged in the first interviews seem to be:

- investment (commitment to advising, attitude, and presence of the advisor)
- knowledge (curriculum, SSW program, university, community, local agencies, field of social work); and
- the advisor’s advising strategy (preparation for advising, setting expectations and goals with advisees, presenting alternatives and engaging in discussion about those alternatives).

What is your reaction to these priorities? Why, how, or in what way are these elements of the advising relationship and process important to you?

MSW ACADEMIC ADVISING INVENTORY

PART I

Parts I and II of this *Inventory* concern how you view the IDEAL MSW academic advisor. There are 14 pairs of statements in Part I. You are to choose the one statement from each pair (A-D or D-H) that best describes, in your opinion, the ideal MSW academic advisor (that is, what you want your MSW advisor to be like). Then determine how important that statement is to you for an ideal advisor (from *very important* to *slightly important*). This is not an evaluation of your past advisors but rather an assessment of your advising preferences for the MSW program you will begin in August.

EXAMPLE

20. My advisor plans my schedule.

OR

20. My advisor and I plan my schedule together.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

E-----F-----**G**-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

EXPLANATION: *In this example, the student has chosen the statement on the right as more descriptive of his or her ideal academic advisor, and determined that the statement is toward the very important end (response G).*

IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME THAT:

OR

IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME THAT:

1. My advisor is interested in helping me learn how to find out about courses and programs for myself.

1. My advisor tells me what I need to know about academic courses and programs.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

2. My advisor tells me what would be the best schedule for me.

2. My advisor suggests important considerations in planning a schedule and then gives me responsibility for the final decision.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

3. My advisor and I talk about career opportunities in conjunction with advising.

3. My advisor and I do *not* talk about career opportunities in conjunction with advising.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

4. My advisor shows an interest in my outside-of-class activities and sometimes suggests activities.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

5. My advisor assists me in identifying realistic academic goals based on what I know about myself, as well as about my test scores and grades.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

6. My advisor registers me for my classes.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

7. When I'm faced with difficult decisions my advisor tells me my alternatives and which one is the best choice.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

8. My advisor does *not* know who to contact about other-than-academic problems.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

9. My advisor gives me tips on managing my time better or on studying more effectively when I seem to need them.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

10. My advisor tells me what I must do in order to be advised.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

4. My advisor does *not* know what I do outside of class.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

5. My advisor identifies realistic academic goals for me based on my test scores and grades.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

6. My advisor teaches me how to register myself for classes.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

7. When I'm faced with difficult decisions, my advisor assists me in identifying alternatives and in considering the consequences of choosing each alternative.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

8. My advisor knows who to contact about other-than-academic problems.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

9. My advisor does *not* spend time giving me tips on managing my time better or on studying more effectively.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

10. My advisor and I discuss our expectations of advising and of each other.

E-----F-----G-----H
Very Slightly
Important Important

11. My advisor suggests what I should major in.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

12. My advisor uses test scores and grades to let him or her know what courses are most appropriate for me to take.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

13. My advisor talks with me about my other-than-academic interests and plans.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

14. My advisor keeps informed of my academic progress by examining my files and grades *only*.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

11. My advisor suggests steps I can take to help me decide on a major.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

12. My advisor and I use information, such as test scores, grades, interests, and abilities, to determine what courses are most appropriate for me to take.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

13. My advisor does *not* talk with me about interests and plans other than academic ones.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

14. My advisor keeps informed of my academic progress by examining my files and grades and by talking to me about classes.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

PART II

There are 11 pairs of statements in Part II. You are to choose the one statement from each pair (A-D or D-H) that best describes, in your opinion, the ideal MSW academic advisor (that is, what you want your MSW advisor to be like). Then determine how important that statement is to you for an ideal advisor (from *very important* to *slightly important*). This is not an evaluation of your present or past advisors but rather an assessment of your advising preferences for the MSW program you will begin in August.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME THAT:

OR IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME THAT:

1. My advisor tells me which concentration will meet my needs.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

2. My advisor shares knowledge about social work licensure and NASW but does *not* discuss my future involvement in the profession of social work.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

3. My advisor and I share academic interests related to social work.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

4. My advisor explains the mission and curriculum requirements of the MSW program to me.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

5. My advisor asks me how I plan to incorporate social work values into my professional practice.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

1. My advisor asks questions that prompt me to think about my choice of concentration from several different perspectives.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

2. My advisor shares knowledge about social work licensure and NASW, as well as my future involvement in the profession of social work.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

3. My advisor and I do *not* share academic interests related to social work.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

4. My advisor explains the mission and curriculum requirements of the MSW program to me, and we discuss how the program could meet my academic goals.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

5. My advisor does *not* ask me how I plan to incorporate social work values into my professional practice.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

6. My advisor asks me how my field practicum relates to my course work.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

7. My advisor and I do *not* discuss ethical dilemmas related to social work practice or possible ways to approach them.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

8. I take responsibility for scheduling meetings with my advisor.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

9. My advisor tells me when registration deadlines are approaching.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

10. My advisor and I do *not* discuss my personal concerns.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

11. My advisor and I discuss continuing education and lifelong learning options for when I complete my MSW.

A-----B-----C-----D
Very Slightly
Important Important

6. My advisor does *not* ask me how my field practicum relates to my course work.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

7. My advisor and I discuss ethical dilemmas related to social work practice and possible ways to approach them.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

8. My advisor takes responsibility for scheduling meetings with me.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

9. My advisor teaches me how to access information about registration deadlines.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

10. My advisor and I discuss my personal concerns.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

11. My advisor and I do *not* discuss continuing education or lifelong learning options for when I complete my MSW.

E-----F-----G-----H
Slightly Very
Important Important

PART III

Part III of this inventory concerns your preferences for the MSW advising experience as well as your previous advising experiences. Please respond to the following open-ended questions:

1. List additional essential elements of the advising experience that are important to you and have not been addressed in this survey. Why are they important to you?
2. What do you perceive as the strengths of your previous advising experiences? Describe a specific instance or instances when you had a positive advising experience.
3. What do you perceive as the weaknesses of your previous advising experiences? Describe a specific instance when you felt uncomfortable or disappointed during a previous advising experience.
4. Overall, how would you describe your satisfaction with your previous advising experiences? Why?
5. Briefly describe any hopes for your graduate advising experience that are different from your expectations for or experiences with undergraduate advising.
6. In your own words, describe the purpose of advising at the MSW level.
7. What are three or four essential elements in a positive MSW advisor-advisee relationship?

PART IV

Please respond to the following demographic questions:

1. What is your gender?
 - (a) male
 - (b) female
2. What is your primary cultural/racial background?
 - (a) African-American
 - (b) Asian
 - (c) Hispanic
 - (d) Native American
 - (e) White
 - (f) Other
 - (g) Decline to respond
3. What was your age at your last birthday?
4. Previous Education
 - a. Did you receive your undergraduate degree from a private or public university? What was the approximate number of undergraduate students at that institution?
 - b. What was your undergraduate major(s) area of study?
 - c. Did you have an undergraduate minor area of study? If so, what was it?
 - d. Please list any additional degrees you hold and your major area of study for those degrees.

Thank you for your participation! Your responses have been submitted successfully. All survey responses will remain separate from any personally identifiable information. After data collection and analysis for this research study are complete, several participants may be asked to review initial findings and provide feedback. If you would be willing to participate in this final phase of the study, please provide your name and email address below.

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

APPENDIX B: Invitations to Participate in Research Study

Invitation to Participate in Focus Groups

Dear Full-time UNC-Chapel Hill MSW Students:

I would like to extend an invitation to you to participate in dissertation research being conducted by me, Sarah Naylor, under the supervision of Senior Research Scientist Dr. Donald Reichard at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Because I am interested in providing an effective and rewarding advising experience for MSW students, I am conducting a research study focused on how incoming MSW students at UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work perceive the advising relationship. You were selected to participate in this study because you are a current full-time MSW student. A total of approximately 90 students will participate in this study, and your participation is completely voluntary.

Two focus groups will be conducted, one on Monday, April 24 from 5-6:30pm in Room 473, and one on Tuesday, April 25 from 12-1:30pm in Room 473. There are still several slots open in each focus group. Participants will be asked to give important reactions and advice based on their perceptions of academic advising. The results will be used to refine interview and survey questions for another phase of this study. If you choose to participate in one of these focus groups, your participation will last approximately 90 minutes. If you have class at 6pm on Monday, you are still invited and encouraged to participate in the Monday focus group and leave early to attend your class. You will receive pizza and salad during the focus group in appreciation for your participation, and there is no cost for participating in the study. The focus group discussion will be audio taped so participant comments can be captured in a transcript for analysis. Every effort will be taken to protect the identity of focus group participants. You will not be identified in any report or publication of this study or its results.

No risks are anticipated should you participate in this study. Although I am your academic advisor, my role will have no bearing on the focus group discussion because it will address your expectations for the advising process rather than your personal experience. You may find that you benefit from your participation by having a more conscious understanding of academic advising and the value of the advising relationship. There will also be professional benefit from this study, as the information obtained will be communicated to the profession through presentations at professional meetings and possibly reports and publication. The study will generate a more thorough understanding of MSW student constructs for the advising experience.

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact me at 919-962-6444 or smnaylor@email.unc.edu. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional

Review Board, which insures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved the research and this consent form. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered, anonymously if you wish, by calling Research Compliance Officer Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482. In addition, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, UNC-Chapel Hill's Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu, which has also approved this study.

TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY, please send me an email, give me a call (see above email address and phone number), or stop by my office (370-D) and indicate whether you can participate in the April 24 focus group or the April 25 focus group. If you volunteer to participate in one of the focus groups, you may choose to stop your participation at any time. This will not affect your class standing or grades at UNC-Chapel Hill. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you take part in this research.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. I hope that I can share your views with the greater professional community and use your responses to help shape recommendations for enhancing the MSW advising experience.

Sincerely,

Sarah Naylor, M.T.S.
Student Services

Email Invitation to Participate in In-depth Interviews

Understanding Graduate Student Constructs for Finding Meaning in the Advising Experience: A Qualitative Case Study of Incoming Master's of Social Work Students

Dear [Student First Name]:

This is an invitation to participate in research being conducted by Ms. Sarah Naylor under the supervision of Senior Research Scientist Dr. Donald Reichard at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Because I am interested in providing an effective and rewarding advising experience for MSW students, I am conducting a research study focused on how incoming MSW students at UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work perceive the advising relationship. You are one of approximately 25 incoming full-time MSW students who are invited to participate in the in-depth interview phase of this study. Interview participants were selected to represent a typical sample of incoming MSW students. A total of approximately 90 students will participate in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Your participation in this project will consist of two one hour interviews approximately one month apart as well as completion of a survey that will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You will also be asked to review transcripts of your interviews to ensure their accuracy. Overall, your participation in this study will take approximately three hours. If you choose to participate in this study, a location convenient for you will be arranged for the interviews and you will receive \$30 to compensate you for your time. The interviews will be audio taped so your comments can be captured in a transcript for analysis. Every effort will be taken to protect the identity of interview participants. You will not be identified in any report or publication of this study or its results.

No risks are anticipated should you participate in this study. You may find that you benefit from your participation by having a more conscious understanding of academic advising and the value of the advising relationship. There will also be professional benefit from this study, as the information obtained will be communicated to the profession through presentation at professional meetings and possibly reports and publication. The study will generate a more thorough understanding of MSW student constructs for the advising experience.

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact me at 919-962-6444 or smnaylor@email.unc.edu. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which insures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved the research and this consent form. Questions regarding your rights as a

participant in this project can be answered, anonymously if you wish, by calling Research Compliance Officer Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482. In addition, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, UNC-Chapel Hill's Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu, which has also approved this study.

To participate in the study, please respond to this email and indicate the best method of communication for contacting you to arrange a time and place for the first interview. You may choose to stop your participation at any time, and this will not affect your academic standing or student status at UNC-Chapel Hill in any way. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you take part in this research.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. I hope that I can share your views with the greater professional community and use your responses to help shape recommendations for enhancing the MSW advising experience.

Sincerely,

Sarah Naylor
Student Services
UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work

Email Survey Invitation with Consent for Non-Interview Participants

Dear [Student First Name],

This is an invitation to complete a web survey, the MSW Academic Advising Inventory, as part of a research study being conducted to explore how incoming MSW students at UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work perceive the advising relationship. You were selected to participate in this study because you will be entering the MSW program this fall.

To participate in the study, please visit [https://web.uncg.edu/pages/2006/naylor/survey.asp?ias=<\[%IAS\]%>](https://web.uncg.edu/pages/2006/naylor/survey.asp?ias=<[%IAS]%>), complete the web survey, and select the "Submit Survey" button at the end of the survey. Please read the information below that describes how your rights as a survey participant will be protected and print this email for your records.

Because I am interested in providing an effective and rewarding advising experience for MSW students, I am conducting a research study focused on incoming MSW student expectations for the advising experience. The study is being supervised by Senior Research Scientist Dr. Donald Reichard at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. A total of approximately 80 students have been invited to participate in this study, and your participation is completely voluntary.

This survey is composed of questions that will address your expectations for the MSW advising experience as well as a few demographic questions that will be used to describe the participants to this survey. Completion of the questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes. You are free to answer or not answer any particular question and have no obligation to finish answering the questions once you begin.

Your participation is anonymous. Data will be kept in a secure, locked location. All data obtained in this study will be reported as group data. No individual can be or will be identified. Each participant will be assigned an identifying number that will ensure responses are anonymous. The only method of linking surveys with names will be to review the master list that will be kept in a locked, secure location. Participants will not be identified in any reports or publications about this study. The only person who will have access to these data is the researcher named on this letter. Survey data collected for this study will be kept for three years, and then all electronic data files will be deleted and all hard copies of survey data will be shredded.

No risks are anticipated should you participate in this study, however, there may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. Please report any problems or questions about possible risks to the researcher. You may find that you benefit from your participation by having a more conscious understanding of academic advising and the value of the advising relationship. There will also be professional benefit from this study, as the

information obtained will be communicated through presentations at professional meetings and possibly reports and publication. The study will generate a more thorough understanding of MSW student constructs for the advising experience.

You may contact me with any questions at (919) 962-6444 or smnaylor@email.unc.edu. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which insures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved the research and this consent form. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered, anonymously if you wish, by calling Research Compliance Officer Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482. In addition, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, UNC-Chapel Hill's Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu, which has also approved this study.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. I hope that I can share your views with the greater professional community and use your response to help shape recommendations for enhancing the MSW advising experience. Submitting your survey responses connotes your consent to be a participant in this study. You are advised to print a copy of this consent form for your records.

Again, to participate in this study please visit:
[https://web.uncg.edu/pages/2006/naylor/survey.asp?ias=<%\[IAS\]%>](https://web.uncg.edu/pages/2006/naylor/survey.asp?ias=<%[IAS]%>) or click on the link at the top of this email.

Sincerely,
Sarah

Sarah Naylor, M.T.S.
Student Services
UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work
301 Pittsboro Street, CB#3550
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Phone: (919) 962-6444
Fax: (919) 843-8562

Email Survey Invitation for In-depth Interview Participants

Dear [Student First Name],

Thank you once again for participating in this research study designed to explore how MSW students perceive the academic advising relationship. Please complete the second phase of your participation, the MSW Academic Advising Inventory, at this time. You may access the online survey at [https://web.uncg.edu/pages/2006/naylor/intsurvey.asp?ias=<\[%\[IAS\]%>](https://web.uncg.edu/pages/2006/naylor/intsurvey.asp?ias=<[%[IAS]%>).

The MSW Academic Advising Inventory is composed of questions that address your expectations for the MSW advising experience. Completion of the questionnaire should take no longer than 15 minutes. You are free to answer or not answer any particular question and have no obligation to finish answering the questions once you begin. Your participation is anonymous. Data will be kept in a secure, locked location. All data obtained in this study will be reported as group data and no individual participant can be or will be identified.

You may contact me with any questions by telephone (919) 962-6444 or by email (smnaylor@email.unc.edu). Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered, anonymously if you wish, by calling Research Compliance Officer Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482. In addition, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, UNC-Chapel Hill's Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu, which has also approved this study.

Again, to complete this survey please visit [https://web.uncg.edu/pages/2006/naylor/intsurvey.asp?ias=<\[%\[IAS\]%>](https://web.uncg.edu/pages/2006/naylor/intsurvey.asp?ias=<[%[IAS]%>) or click on the link at the top of this email. I look forward to our second interview in July, the final phase of your participation in this study.

Sincerely,
Sarah

Sarah Naylor, M.T.S.
Student Services
UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work
301 Pittsboro Street, CB#3550
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

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Fax: (919) 843-8562

APPENDIX C: Consent Forms

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: FOCUS GROUPS

Project Title: Understanding Graduate Student Constructs for Finding Meaning in the Advising Experience: A Qualitative Case Study of Incoming Master's of Social Work Students (IRB Study No. 06-0079)

Project Director: Sarah Naylor
301 Pittsboro Street
CB#3550
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
(919)962-6444
smnaylor@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty. Choosing not to participate or choosing to end participation will not affect your class standing or grades at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researcher named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to learn about elements of the advising relationship that incoming MSW students feel will result in an effective and rewarding advising experience.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 90 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

Your participation in this focus group will last approximately 90 minutes.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

The group will be asked to give important reactions and advice, based on its perceptions of academic advising. The results will be used to refine interview questions for another phase of this study, in-depth interviews on the expectations of incoming MSW student for the advising experience. Therefore, it is important that you respond to these questions based on your MSW advising expectations, not your MSW advising experience. No questions will be directed to you individually, but instead will be posed to the group. You may choose to respond or not respond at any point during the discussion. The focus group discussion will be audio taped so your comments can be captured in a transcript for analysis.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. This study will generate a more

thorough understanding of MSW student constructs for the advising experience. You may also expect to benefit by participating in this study by having a more conscious understanding of academic advising and the value of the advising relationship.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

No risks or discomfort to you from being in this study are anticipated. Although I am your academic advisor, my role will have no bearing on the focus group discussion because it will address your expectations for the advising process rather than your personal experience. Even though it will be emphasized to all participants that comments made during the focus group session should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future. Therefore, you are encouraged to be as honest and open as you can, but remain aware of the limits in protecting confidentiality.

How will your privacy be protected?

Every effort will be taken to protect your identity as a participant in this study. Data will be kept in a secure, locked location. You will not be identified in any report or publication of this study or its results. Your name will not appear on any transcripts; instead, you will be given a participant identification number. Audio tapes of the focus groups will be kept for three years and then will be destroyed. At any time, participants may request that the audio recording be turned off. Transcripts of the focus groups will also be kept for three years and then destroyed. Electronic copies of the transcripts will be deleted and hard copies of the transcripts will be shredded.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will receive a pizza lunch during the focus group in appreciation for your participation.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which insures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved the research and this consent form. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered, anonymously if you wish, by calling Research Compliance Officer Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482. In addition, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, UNC-Chapel Hill's Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu, which has also approved this study.

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Project Title: Understanding Graduate Student Constructs for Finding Meaning in the Advising Experience:
A Qualitative Case Study of Incoming Master's of Social Work Students (IRB Study No. 06-0079)

Project Director: Sarah Naylor
301 Pittsboro Street
CB#3550
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
(919)962-6444
smnaylor@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty. Choosing not to participate or choosing to end participation will not affect your class standing or grades at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to learn about elements of the advising relationship that MSW students feel will result in an effective and rewarding advising experience.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 90 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?

Your participation in this project will consist of two one-hour interviews approximately four to six weeks apart as well as completion of a survey that will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You will also be asked to review transcripts of your interviews to ensure their accuracy. Overall, your participation in this study will take approximately three hours.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

There will be three steps to your participation in this study. First, you will complete an audio taped interview with the researcher to discuss your understanding of academic advising. Second, you will complete a short survey to assess your MSW advising preferences. Third, you will participate in a final audio taped follow-up interview to reflect further on the role you hope advising will play in your MSW advising experience. You may choose to skip any question you do not wish to answer for any reason, and you may ask that the audio recorder be turned off.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. This study will generate a more thorough understanding of MSW student constructs for the advising experience. You may also expect to benefit by participating in this study by having a more conscious understanding of academic advising and the value of the advising relationship.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

There are no known risks. There may be uncommon or previously unknown risks. You should report any problems to the researcher. Although I am your academic advisor, my role will have no bearing on the focus group discussion because it will address your expectations for the advising process rather than your personal experience.

How will your privacy be protected?

All personally identifying information will be strictly confidential. Data will be kept in a secure, locked location. When the interviews are transcribed, an ID number will be assigned to each participant. The list that links participants to their ID number as well as the audio tapes of the interviews will be kept in a secure, locked location. Audio tapes of the interviews will be kept for three years and then will be destroyed. At any time, participants may request that the audio recording be turned off. Transcripts of the interviews will also be kept for three years and then destroyed. Electronic copies of the transcripts will be deleted and hard copies of the transcripts will be shredded.

The only person with access to individually identifiable data will be the researcher. No information will be used in the dissertation study that would make it possible for anyone to identify any participants. Direct quotes may be used, but these would be quoted as coming from “a person” or a person of a certain label like “one woman said.” In addition, participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will be receiving \$30 for taking part in this study as compensation for your total participation time of approximately three hours. If you withdraw from the study prior to completion, your payment will be prorated based on your length of participation.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

There will be no cost to you for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to you if the information might affect your willingness to continue participation in the project.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which insures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved the research and this consent form. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered, anonymously if you wish, by calling Research Compliance Officer Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482. In addition, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, UNC-Chapel Hill’s Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu, which has also approved this study.

Participant’s Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

APPENDIX D: Interview Participant Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Gender		Race		Residency		Age		
	F	M	White	Minority	In-state	Out of State	≤ 23	24 -28	≥ 29
Nicole	1		1		1			1	
Kristin	1		1			1			1
Vanessa	1			1		1		1	
Jane	1		1			1			1
Linda	1		1		1		1		
Kim	1		1			1	1		
Dana	1		1		1			1	
Sharon	1			1	1		1		
Amy	1		1		1			1	
Karen	1		1		1			1	
Julie	1		1		1			1	
Amanda	1		1		1			1	
Rebecca	1		1		1			1	
Marie	1		1		1			1	
Gwen	1		1		1			1	
Mia	1		1			1		1	
Adam		1	1		1				1
Total	16	0	15	2	12	5	3	11	2

APPENDIX E: Data Analysis Matrix Excerpt

Participant Number	What are your preferences for the role of your academic advisor in the advising relationship?	What are some specific examples of expectations that you have of yourself as the advisee in this relationship?	Can you describe any preferences you have for your graduate advising experience that are different from your expectations or experiences with undergraduate advising?
1	to be interested in the field she's interested in, so they can help with post-graduation plans; navigate the opportunities of the MSW program (concentration, elective courses that are best fit for her interests, best place for 2nd year field placement) knowledge and experience in the field she's interested in; knowledge of local agencies (so they can help her choose second year field placement); easy to talk to personality-wise (friendly and available); take initiative to check in with her and see how she's doing	I need to take responsibility (contact advisor if I have a question or need something) and not expect him/her to figure it out automatically	UG - didn't know what she wanted to do beyond graduation so expectations were directly related to her course of study, GR - help by helping her figure out the field she's most interested in, the best way to prepare for that field, and the next step after graduation such as licensure
2	to share her areas of interest - advisor should embrace advising/want to be a mentor and role model and not just do it because they're "made" to, help advisees brainstorm compassionate, (supportive of the decisions she makes/supportive and not take her decisions personally if they don't match the advisor's interests)*, desire to help (wants to feel as if her advisor cares and wants to hear from her - she would love it if her advisor would ask her to check in every month or so to show interest)*, understands making major career changes (because that's what she's doing), put her in touch with others who are connected to area she wants to pursue, knowledgeable of curriculum and career options, good communicator, communicates expectations from the beginning, have MSW degree	seek out my advisor, be open to feedback and constructive criticism (be open to your advisor's expertise in terms of whether or not your ideas are realistic), use advisor as resource	UG - advising should be more structured and mandatory - students are often less directed and less mature, GR - advising needs are greater because graduate school is going to be the springboard for your career - advising can make the biggest impact at the graduate level because people are more mature
3	experience in the field of social work, use their knowledge to respond to student questions or refer them to advisor's contacts if not sure how to respond, networking help (for example, having a list of available employers in the area), knowledge of the job market for social workers	take ownership and an active role in your career goals, finding out what is expected of the advisee	UG - focus is on academics GR - focus is on professional counseling geared toward your profession, hopes GR advising will be more personal because the program is a professional program for a degree in a specific field
4	aware of programs she's interested in (dual degree program with public health), knowledgeable about the fields and classes she should take, able to suggest field of practice that's in line with what she wants to do, be available if anything goes wrong, know her advisor is interested in what she has to say and comes across as caring, concerned, wanting her to succeed (you just "know" or "feel" that they're interested by the way they respond to your questions and whether they seem rushed), knowledgeable about different professions within social work, knowledge about classes, community service activities, job opportunities, and local agencies, suggest certificates or courses that would help her after graduation, advisor has experience in your profession	taking advantage of your advisor as a resource, pursue advisor with her questions/ask for their input (advisor won't know what questions she has), take advisor's response into consideration knowing they know more than she does	UG - you're thinking about your major and finishing college, but not about job-related issues - your questions are more related to your classes GR - you're older and have more job experience, so you want specific advice about what you'd be doing in a certain job and what classes to take, GR advising should be more career-focused

5	<p>knowledgeable about different paths she could take in social work, able to show her the positives and negatives in the choices, sharing opinions but supportive even if she doesn't choose that opinion, have an MSW, have worked in field that she's interested in, knowledge of social work in the NC area and have stories about people they know who have done different things, has a lot of energy and is willing to work with someone who has a lot of energy (quick responses to her messages, pointing her in the right direction/people even when they don't know the answers), feel comfortable around advisor (able to speak her mind, knowing her advisor looks forward to meeting with her and not rushed), trusting her advisor, given her interests how can she take classes and do other things that tie into those interests/maybe explain how her interests tie in with something she hasn't thought of</p>	<p>make effort to connect with advisor (even if you don't think you need an advisor, be ready to work with an advisor and open to learning because they'll know more than you do about social work), trying to get everything across to her advisor, being patient, thanking advisor for his or her work, being honest, willing to learn about the social work world and not be closed-minded to what I thought it would be like, adaptable to change</p>	<p>UG - had low expectations because her high school advisor wasn't very helpful - wasn't sure of her future path GR - has expectations that her MSW advisor will be at least as helpful as her UG advisor was (very helpful) - she's now a lot more mature and has a better idea of what she wants to do</p>
6	<p>resource (can help her learn more about the field and refer to people who work in her area of interest), remembering her when she comes to meet and follows up with her, give feedback and help her narrow down her career interests, knowledge of the program here, what typical student experience/timeline of events looks like, connections to the faculty and resources within the school/university and community connections, advisor who has similar interests, being encouraging and genuinely interested in her success, investment on their part in advisees so they don't feel like they're just another name or face</p>	<p>coming in with questions and providing information about myself to give advisor a background about me, make myself available when it's convenient for advisor, coming to meet with advisor enough to give relationship a chance to develop, expecting advisor to give you feedback and guidance and know you'll still have to make the choices yourself and take ownership</p>	<p>UG - more academic focus, less career focus, in UG she felt lost (didn't know where to go with questions, felt lost among so many students, didn't know career goals) GR - have same advisor for both years (unlike her UG experience), more availability, "forward-thinking" and taking about what happens after you graduate, more career-focused (although academic focus is still needed), more personal advising as far as investment and commitment</p>
7	<p>holistic view of the field, knowledgeable of the field, knowledgeable about her specialization but also about different kinds of social work/have a variety of experience (advising wouldn't be a good role for a professor who only teaching one type of class or has only one type of experience or has been very specialized), knowledgeable of local agencies, encouraging (have attitude that they're here to help advisees succeed - wouldn't want an advisor who "pretends" to be interested or isn't really interested), invested (willing to take time to really get to know her in terms of her goals and hopes - this is more important than knowledge because if they're invested they will help her find her own way and say "oh, you should talk with this person" and she wouldn't mind that they don't have the answer right away but would feel happy they are willing to help her out and find her direction*), remember each advisee's name and keep a file or some information on advisees</p>	<p>do research in terms of classes and opportunities, talk to current students because they're a tremendous resource, take ideas to advisors to get their feedback, have attitude that's open to receiving feedback and to suggestions for new experiences (because this is a person with more experience and knowledge in the field than I have) - advisor can help her expand her horizons, be open to new experiences and possibilities, actively seeking advising</p>	<p>UG - didn't need advising beyond short sessions, she went in with "this was what I was going to do and there was no conflict with it and so she just went with it" (ME: relationship wasn't a partnership!)GR - will need more advising than she did for UG and more directed advising because it's now going to be more career focused - will need to be a more full experience to help her see all the perspectives and possibilities but at the same time help her focus</p>
8	<p>knowledgeable about the field of social work, taking the time to meet with advisees (so she doesn't feel rushed), expects personal advising experience because the program is so small (she wouldn't be like a number), she'd like to be able to "walk in" to their office, compassionate (be able to empathize with students and remember when they were graduate students), as social workers illustrate everything that she aims to be as a social worker</p>	<p>doesn't want to disappoint her advisor and have them think "oh well, I helped this student for nothing" - doing a good job so she doesn't disappoint her advisor, go see her advisor often so her advisor knows her well, be understanding when advisor's schedule is busy and they're less available, don't expect advisor to fix your mistakes (if you've missed a deadline, it's your fault and not your advisor's)</p>	<p>GR - needs more frequent contact with her advisor because the program is so intense - hopes it's similar to the personal advising she received her senior year ("when you're comfortable with you advisor . . . , then I think it plays a bigger role in your progress in school. I think it's linked.")</p>

9	<p>familiar with her declared concentration, have experience in the field she wants to go into (real world experience and know how specific courses could help her get to that field), available, discussions expand beyond the requirements to how she can get the most out of her education at UNC, personable (so she feels that advising is a priority for advisors and not just an added task the school assigned), personable (remembering her name, responding quickly to emails, taking the time to answer your questions instead of rushing through, taking the time to find out about more than the courses you're taking - your personal details, experience, and goals)</p>	<p>be aware of her goals, taking the time to go see advisor during his or her office hours and making sure she takes necessary steps to establish a relationship with her advisor, be open to suggestions (since they are professors and have the experience)/willing to listen to what advisor has to say and how it applies to her situation</p>	<p>UG - less focused, exploring new things, don't necessarily know where you want to be after you graduate GR - much more focused on an angle, and MSW is a step to a career (for her, a career in non-profit management) - she has a clear and defined step in mind and so she needs to know how to get where she wants to be</p>
10	<p>making availability clear at the outset, has experience and interest in the field of social work she's interested in, in-depth knowledge of the program, in-depth knowledge of field placements that are available and coincide with her career path/goals for the future, supportive of her interests and goals, personable (has basic social skills and doesn't make her feel like they're rushed), organized, knows about research opportunities and what's going on at UNC</p>	<p>having realistic expectations about advisor's availability, compiling several questions and having one meeting as opposed to three separate meetings with one question each, not going to "shoot the breeze" but having a purpose and being direct, knowing what she wants and asking them to help her get it, recognizing that they're advisors and not therapists - not abusing the advising relationship is important</p>	<p>UG - "didn't really know what the heck I wanted to do" - advising at UG level won't usually drive advisee's career GR - advisor should have a more active role because at this point in her life she's "much more directed, and she's going as an adult to further her career, and I think they'd [advisors] play a bigger part because of that" she sees a huge difference between the two*</p>
11	<p>good listener, processor (able to figure out what she's saying even when she doesn't realize it), can point advisees in a certain direction in terms of course work, knows the community well in terms of placement and where skills learned in certain classes could be most helpful in specific agencies*, remembering her, gaining trust with her advisor and having rapport with her advisor (knowing them well enough to feel comfortable having conversations with things other than her classes, body language, and eye contact are important in establishing this rapport), knowledge of the curriculum (the different tracks) and of faculty, knowledge of where the advisee's field placement is and how it's going, checking in with advisees to see how they're doing at mid-semester, relationship with the advisor so advising is a triangle & not a line with three points</p>	<p>knowing more about her personal direction and where she wants to go, knowing it's her responsibility as well as her advisor's to develop a relationship, being open to different kinds of questions and responses/suggestions and advice, be a good listener (don't go in to a meeting with your schedule already decided)</p>	<p>UG - needed more conversations based on what she wanted to do with her life and using that information to choose a major that might be a good fit GR - now that she's chosen the broad fit she's working on the specifics within it and her master's advising needs to be not so much on what she wants to do with her life but on how to do it - needs more specific direction</p>
12	<p>approachable (emitting vibes so that you feel advisor is glad to see you and not burdened by your presence*) and available are the most important things - hopes the advisor to student ration is adequate, thinks advisor should have a good understanding of course work and requirements to the point where the advisor could offer ideas if she's having trouble choosing between two courses, wants to feel comfortable enough with her advisor to talk to them in confidence about academics (for example if she's having a problem with a professor)</p>	<p>not counting too much on them or depending on the advisor to solve things</p>	<p>UG - "in UG I was sort of this lost sheep . . . it is more me that has changed than my advisor themselves" GR - more professional advising relationship because she considers herself more professional now and wants to be taken seriously in her career (she's "not only a student but an adult - a professional - that has been in the workplace for a few years . . . she has a little bit of experience working 9 to 5")</p>

13	<p>advisor should have experience in field of social work and help her see different ways people use their degree, be comfortable person to talk to, good listener, wide variety of experiences to draw from and get ideas, friendly (non-verbal things determine whether or not they're friendly and make her feel comfortable), be interested in their students (take an interest in their academic life and other parts of their life as well), invite students over to advisor's home to show interest in their non-academic life or sharing a meal together</p>	<p>take initiative to go see advisor if she's confused or wrestling with an issue, initiate asking for help or advice (for example, asking for suggestions for a field placement), be friendly, be open/willing to share and express thoughts that she's not comfortable with or wrestling with, be an active listener</p>	<p>UG - didn't really know what she wanted to do when she graduated and didn't expect advisor to help her find a job that meets her interests - more about talking about the things in your classes - goal was to get a degree and a good education GR - expectation that there's more than in UG now that she knows what she wants to do - expectation that advisor will help her find a job that meets her interests because this is a professional program and she anticipates using her MSW - she feels like there's a component to GR advising about finding a job afterwards and thinking about your career/long term goals for yourself - goal is to gain education and skills she'll use in her career</p>
14	<p>familiar with different faculty and courses, experience advising students on her track (macro), being organized (able to keep a profile of her interests and questions in order to maintain continuity from session to session), good communication skills (active listening, helping you focus on the issue at hand, let's you talk rather than talking at you - hearing advisor incorporate things she has said in the conversation, body language, following-up if they say they will get back to you), able to explain things clearly, available, approachable, advisor's advising load shouldn't be so high that they're overwhelmed and students don't feel like they can get the help they need</p>	<p>seeking advice of advisor when you run into roadblocks, academic integrity (following school code of conduct), striving for excellence and not settling for mediocrity, attendance and timeliness</p>	<p>UG - needed help figuring out a major and its requirements, more open-ended than GR GR - more focused, and she knows the area she wants to study so she won't need so much help figuring out what she wants to do but where (and within that there is some choice in terms of courses and professors) - MSW study is professionally geared so the focus on how she implements her degree professionally will come into play more than in UG - professional focus (two year program and placement is part of your course work - most students have professional experience and are headed in that direction career-wise)</p>
15	<p>advisor should have a degree in social work, breadth or depth of experience in the field to know what's out there, have some local contacts and knowledge of what's in the area, to point you in the right direction if they don't have experience themselves in your area of interests, being comfortable with students/knowing advisor is interested in what your goals are and taking the time to get to know you (she'd feel advisor is interested in her if there's an initial introductory advising meeting where advisor takes time to get to know you and look at your resume, discuss your interests, where you've been and where you want to go, how to use MSW time to get there)</p>	<p>asking her questions, being assertive to seek advice, realizing that you have an advisor and don't have to go through the program alone</p>	<p>UG - goal is finding out what to major in and those types of goals GR - expects advising to be more focused than UG - now you've chosen your area of study and need to figure out "so what are you going to do with it?" - expects advising to be more like her junior and senior years of college (with her informal advisors)</p>
16	<p>should have abundance of knowledge of the field of social work, be honest, personable, experienced in field they are planning on advising in so they have knowledge of the sorts of jobs you might want, they have the degree you're trying to get and done the things you want to try to do so they can share their wisdom, someone you feel comfortable talking to, is enthusiastic and nice (actually feeling like they're genuinely interested in helping you and advising isn't a burdensome part of their job - you can tell when someone is genuinely interested and invested in what you're trying to do), able to point out a variety of things that might be right for you (curriculum and career-wise) that you might not know about</p>	<p>seeking out advising - in order for the advisor to help you, you have to seek advising (she didn't do that as an UG) - take time to establish a relationship and not go see advisor only once a year when she has a pressing question, seek help early in the process before it's too late, being open to different suggestions and advisor might have and looking into those things instead of assuming it's not relevant or you're not interested</p>	<p>UG - always knew she'd be going to a GR program, so the advising she sought out was about how to get into graduate school GR - she got into GR school so now the purpose is to get into a job that she's interested in (and has the salary she's looking for - that sort of thing)</p>

17	<p>familiar with and unopposed to social work realms outside of their own preferences (objective), ability to recognize strengths and weaknesses of the candidate and match them with social work roles to help provide a starting point for someone, he has all these things in his record (experiences, strengths, etc.) that are powerful - he wants to know what that would look like on the "you are here" map - able to tell advisee "you would make a great whatever, you might really enjoy whatever," knowledge of a variety of social work venues, taking an interest in him and his questions(* look on page 8 - if advisors don't really care "it is going to be a miserable experience you are going to wind up feeling like you're just a cow waiting for slaughter . . ."</p>	<p>present to them that he's an adult with some education and an idea of what he wants to do with his life, and he's not as lost as he was as an UG, feels it's his responsibility to provide a synthesis of himself and clearly define what he doesn't know, what he wants to know, and what he wants out of the program, be familiar with the program information that exists, able to articulate his strengths and weaknesses and background and desires and goals, be open and bring all his thoughts to his advisor</p>	<p>UG - didn't know field of work he wanted to go into, so even though everything in the world was available to him his expectations were unrealistic that advisor would be able to help him isolate a range of careers GR - expects his advisor in a prestigious program like this to be familiar with the types of students that come into their program (by collecting information about career tracks of graduates for the last ten years of so, also average placement for someone with his criteria, statistically this is where people like you usually wind up career-wise) - he expects a lot more intelligence, research, background information, and planning on the part of the advisors/program than he did as an UG that can tell him what he's lacking, what he needs to know, and where he's probably headed "as an advisee you would think we (the SSW) collect sociological data and we make projections and study outcomes that okay here's students and that's a data set and there are a whole bunch of variables and data sets there and if we collect that data it would follow that we should be able to make some sort of predication or advisements towards outcomes"</p>
Patterns	<p>red - knowledge of field of social work and experience in the field (have MSW) - 15 blue - knowledge of curriculum-concentration, field of practice, requirements, electives, field placements, community service and volunteer opportunities (and ability to help make curriculum suggestions based on interests and career goals of advisee) - 10 purple - knowledge of careers in social work/job market/local agencies/networking - 10 olive green - knowledge of campus resources - 4 black - caring, concerned, compassionate - 4 pink - invested/interested in advisees' well being and success - 11 brown - supportive/encouraging - 3 green - establish safe and comfortable environment/trust/personable/friendly/approachable /honest - 9 Turquoise - available, don't have too many advisees or make you feel like a burden/take their time with you - 7 italics - getting to know you personally - 2 grey - propose alternatives and help brainstorm - 4 underline - role model - 2 lime - good communicator/listener - 7 light yellow - organized/keep records of student info. - 2</p>	<p>Red - Take initiative/responsibility of seeking out advisor (14)Green - Be open to advisor's suggestions (9)Blue - Make effort to share information about their interests and goals with their advisor (4)</p>	<p>Red - Undergraduate Advising is less directed, less mature, focus is on meeting curriculum requirements (15)Blue - graduate advising is to prepare for next steps after graduation - students more mature and directed (have decided on area of study, focus on narrowing focus and preparing for career) - 15Pink - more personal advising is needed because MSW program is a professional program preparing students to be social work professionals - 3</p>

APPENDIX F: Patterns and Attributes Derived from First Interviews, Second Interviews, and Open-Ended MSW-AAI Questions

<i>Pattern</i>	<i>Attributes</i>	<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Data Source and Frequency*</i>
Focus on Future	Undergraduate advising focus is on degree, Graduate advising focus is on career preparation	Role of UG vs. GR Advising	FI - General
		Hopes for UG vs. GR Advising	MSW-AAI
	Advisors should help students with curriculum decisions early on and evolve to career guidance	Personal Advising Preference	MSW-AAI - Typical
		Purpose of UG vs. GR Advising	SI - General
	Students need personal advising geared to individual career goals throughout the program	Evolution of Advising Needs	FI - Typical
		Evolution of Advising Needs	FI - Typical
		Important Advising Element	MSW-AAI - Variant
		Personal Advising Preference	SI - Typical
	Advisors should discuss social work career focus and preparation with students	Evolution of Advising Needs	SI - Typical
		Advising Need	FI - Typical
Comfortable Advising Environment	Advisors need knowledge of the field of social work, curriculum, and career opportunities	Important Advising Element	FI - Typical
		Ideal Advising Impact	FI - Typical
	Advisors should establish comfortable and open relationship with students	Important Advising Element	FI - Typical
		Explanation for MSW-AAI Responses	MSW-AAI - Typical
	Advisors should invest in the advising relationship	Advising Need	SI - General
		Advising Preferences	FI - General
	Advisors should be available	Important Advising Element	FI - Typical
		Major Advising Element	SI - Typical
	Advisors should establish comfortable and open relationship with students	Advising Need	FI - Typical
		Advising Preferences	FI - Typical
Comfortable Advising Environment	Advisors should establish comfortable and open relationship with students	Important Advising Element	FI - Typical
		Essential Advising Element	MSW-AAI - Variant
	Advisors should invest in the advising relationship	Condition for Ideal Advising	SI - Typical
		Advising Preferences	FI - Typical
	Advisors should be available	Important Advising Element	FI - Typical
		Ideal Advising Impact	FI - Typical
	Advisors should be available	Major Advising Element	SI - Typical
		Advising Preferences	FI - Typical
	Advisors should be available	Important Advising Element	FI - Typical
		Essential Advising Element	MSW-AAI - Variant

APPENDIX F: Patterns and Attributes Derived from First Interviews, Second Interviews, and Open-Ended MSW-AAI Questions
Continued

<i>Pattern</i>	<i>Attributes</i>	<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Data Source and Frequency*</i>
Advising Strategy	Advisors should have a strategy for advising	Advisor Preferences	FI - Typical
		Important Advising Element	FI - Variant
	Advisors should discuss advising expectations with advisees	Essential Advising Element	MSW-AAI - Variant
		Major Advising Element	SI - Typical
Empowerment	Advisors should have excellent communication skills	Condition for Ideal Advising	SI - Typical
		Advisor Preferences	FI - Variant
	Advisees should take responsibility for the advising relationship	Conditions for Advising	SI - Typical
		Advisor Preferences	FI - Variant
Learning from Experience	Advisees should be open to alternatives before taking responsibility for their own decisions	Advisee Preferences	SI - Variant
		Personal Advising Preference	FI - Typical
	Undergraduate advising experiences	Explanation for MSW-AAI Responses	MSW-AAI - Variant
		Attitude Toward Advising	SI - Typical
Experiences that Influenced Understanding of MSW Advising	Talking with other students	Coping with Not Ideal Advising	SI - Variant
		Advisee Preferences	SI - Typical
	How Advising Role was Learned	Explanation for MSW-AAI Responses	FI - Typical
		Attitude Toward Advising	SI - General
Experiences that Influenced Understanding of MSW Advising	How Advising Role was Learned	Attitude Toward Advising	SI - Variant
		How Advising Role was Learned	FI - Typical
	Undergraduate advising experiences	Influences on MSW Advising Expectations	SI - Typical
		How Advising Role was Learned	FI - Variant
Experiences that Influenced Understanding of MSW Advising	Talking with other students	Influences on MSW Advising Expectations	SI - Rare
		How Advising Role was Learned	FI - Variant
	Undergraduate advising experiences	Influences on MSW Advising Expectations	SI - Rare
		How Advising Role was Learned	FI - Variant

APPENDIX F: Patterns and Attributes Derived from First Interviews, Second Interviews, and Open-Ended MSW-AAI Questions Continued

<i>Pattern</i>	<i>Attributes</i>	<i>Line of Inquiry</i>	<i>Data Source and Frequency*</i>
Experiences that Influenced Understanding of MSW Advising <i>Cont'd</i>	Work experience	How Advising Role was Learned Influences on MSW Advising Expectations	FI – Rare SI – Variant
	Informal advising from faculty members	Influences on MSW Advising Expectations	SI – Rare
	Personal experience and beliefs	How Advising Role was Learned Influences on MSW Advising Expectations	FI – Rare SI – Rare
	Values of social work profession	How Advising Role was Learned	FI – Rare
		Disappointing Past Advising Positive Past Advising Disappointing Past Advising Learning from Past Advising	FI - Variant MSW-AAI - Variant MSW-AAI - Variant SI – Variant
What was Learned from Past Advising Experiences	Desire for an invested advisor	Positive Past Advising Learning from Past Advising	FI - Variant SI – Variant
	Preference for open, honest relationship so advisor can help you think through options	Positive Past Advising Learning from Past Advising	FI - Variant SI – Variant
	Need to take responsibility for advising relationship and academic decisions	Learning from Past Advising	SI – Variant
	Wasn't ready for personalized career advising; now more mature, focused, and ready to take advantage of advising	Learning from Past Advising	SI – Variant
	Need advisor to be available	Learning from Past Advising	SI – Variant
	Need for advisors with sufficient knowledge of the curriculum	Disappointing Past Advising Disappointing Past Advising Learning from Past Advising	FI - Variant MSW-AAI - Variant SI – Variant
	Expectations for social work field	Positive Past Advising Disappointing Previous Advising Learning from Past Advising	FI - Variant SI – Variant SI – Variant

*FI = First Interviews; SI = Second Interviews; MSW-AAI = MSW Academic Advising Inventory